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1849-1916.
James Whitcomb Riley's
complete works : including
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"Wunst they wuz a little boy went out in the woods to shoot a bear"

Memorial Edition

The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

IN TEN VOLUMES

Including Poems and Prose Sketches, many of which have not heretofore been published; an authentic Biography, an elaborate Index and numerous Illustrations in color from Paintings by Howard Chandler Christy and Ethel Franklin Betts

VOLUME VII

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The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

CASSANDER

"CASSANDER! *O* Cassander!"—her mother's voice seems cle'r
As ever, from the old back-porch, a-hollerin' fer her—
Especially in airly Spring—like May, two year' ago—
Last time she hollered fer her,—and Cassander didn't hear!

Cassander was so chirpy-like and sociable and free,
And good to ever'body, and wuz even good to me
Though *I* wuz jes' a common—well, a farm-hand, don't you know,
A-workin' on her father's place, as pore as pore could be!

Her bein' jes' a' only child, Cassander had her way
A good-'eal more'n other girls; and neighbers ust to say
She looked most like her Mother, but wuz turned most like her Pap,—
Except *he* had no use fer *town*-folks then—ner *yit to-day!*

I can't claim she incouraged *me:* She'd let me drive
her in
To town sometimes, on Saturd'ys, and fetch her
home ag'in,
Tel onc't she 'scused "Old Moll" and me,—and
some blame' city-chap,
He driv her home, two-forty style, in face o' kith-
and-kin.

She even tried to make him stay fer supper, but I
'low
He must 'a' kind o' 'spicioned some objections.—
Anyhow,
Her mother callin' at her, whilst her father stood
and shook
His fist,—the town-chap turnt his team and made
his partin' bow.

"Cassander! *You,* Cassander!"—hear her mother
jes' as plain,
And see Cassander blushin' like the peach tree
down the lane,
Whilse I sneaked on apast her, with a sort o'
hang-dog look,
A-feelin' cheap as sorghum and as green as sugar-
cane!

(You see, I'd *skooted* when she met her *town*-beau
—when, in fact,
Ef I'd had sense I'd *stayed* fer her.—But sense wuz
what I lacked!

So I'd cut home ahead o' her, so's I could tell 'em what
Wuz keepin' her. And—*you* know how a jealous fool'll act!)

I past her, I wuz sayin',—but she never turnt her head;
I swallered-like and cle'red my th'oat—but that wuz all I said;
And whilse I hoped fer some word back, it wuzn't what I got.—
That girl'll not stay stiller on the day she's layin' dead!

Well, that-air silence *lasted!*—Ust to listen ever' day
I'd be at work and hear her mother callin' thataway;
I'd *sight* Cassander, mayby, cuttin' home acrost the blue
And drizzly fields; but nary answer—nary word to say!

Putt in about two weeks o' that—two weeks o' rain and mud,
Er mostly so: I couldn't plow. The old crick like a flood:
And, lonesome as a borried dog, I'd wade them old woods through—
The dogwood blossoms white as snow, and redbuds red as blood.

Last time her mother called her—sich a morning
like as now:
The robins and the bluebirds, and the blossoms on
the bough—
And this wuz yit 'fore brekfust, with the sun out
at his best,
And hosses kickin' in the barn—and dry enough to
plow.

"Cassander! *O* Cassander!" . . . And her only
answer—What?—
A letter, twisted round the cook-stove damper,
smokin'-hot,
A-statin': "I wuz married on that day of all the
rest,
The day my husband fetched me home—ef you ain't
all fergot!"

"Cassander! *O* Cassander!" seems, allus, 'long in
May,
I hear her mother callin' her—a-callin', night and
day—
"Cassander! *O* Cassander!" allus callin', as I say,
"Cassander; *O* Cassander!" jes' a-callin' thataway.

A CHILD-WORLD

1709

PROEM

The Child-World—long and long since lost to
view—
A Fairy Paradise!—
How always fair it was and fresh and new—
How every affluent hour heaped heart and eyes
With treasures of surprise!

Enchantments tangible: The under-brink
Of dawns that launched the sight
Up seas of gold: The dewdrop on the pink,
With all the green earth in it and blue height
Of heavens infinite:

The liquid, dripping songs of orchard-birds—
The wee bass of the bees,—
With lucent deeps of silence afterwards;
The gay, clandestine whisperings of the breeze
And glad leaves of the trees.

. . . . . .

O Child-World: After this world—just as when
I found you first sufficed
My soulmost need—if I found you again,
With all my childish dream so realized,
I should not be surprised.

THE CHILD-WORLD

A CHILD-WORLD, yet a wondrous world no less,
To those who knew its boundless happiness.
A simple old frame house—eight rooms in all—
Set just one side the center of a small
But very hopeful Indiana town,—
The upper story looking squarely down
Upon the main street, and the main highway
From East to West,—historic in its day,
Known as The National Road—old-timers, all
Who linger yet, will happily recall
It as the scheme and handiwork, as well
As property, of "Uncle Sam," and tell
Of its importance, "long and long afore
*Rail*roads wuz ever *dreamp'* of!"—Furthermore,
The reminiscent first inhabitants
Will make that old road blossom with romance
Of snowy caravans, in long parade
Of covered vehicles, of every grade
From ox-cart of most primitive design,
To Conestoga wagons, with their fine
Deep-chested six-horse teams, in heavy gear,
High hames and chiming bells—to childish ear

And eye entrancing as the glittering train
Of some sun-smitten pageant of old Spain.
And, in like spirit, haply they will tell
You of the roadside forests, and the yell
Of "wolfs" and "painters," in the long night-ride,
And "screechin' catamounts" on every side.—
Of stage-coach days, highwaymen, and strange crimes,
And yet unriddled mysteries of the times
Called "Good Old." "And why 'Good Old'?" once a rare
Old chronicler was asked, who brushed the hair
Out of his twinkling eyes and said,—"Well, John,
They're 'good old times' because they're dead and gone!"

The old home site was portioned into three
Distinctive lots. The front one—natively
Facing to southward, broad and gaudy-fine
With lilac, dahlia, rose, and flowering vine—
The dwelling stood in; and behind that, and
Upon the alley north and south, left hand,
The old woodhouse,—half, trimly stacked with wood,
And half, a workshop, where a work-bench stood
Steadfastly through all seasons.—Over it,
Along the wall, hung compass, brace-and-bit,
And square, and drawing-knife, and smoothing-plane—
And a little jack-plane, too—the children's vain
Possession by pretense—in fancy they

Manipulating it in endless play,
Turning out countless curls and loops of bright,
Fine satin shavings—Rapture infinite!
Shelved quilting-frames; the tool-chest; the old box
Of refuse nails and screws; a rough gun-stock's
Outline in "curly maple"; and a pair
Of clamps and old kraut-cutter hanging there.
Some "patterns," in thin wood, of shield and scroll,
Hung higher, with a neat "cane fishing-pole"
And careful tackle—all securely out
Of reach of children, rummaging about.

Beside the woodhouse, with broad branches free
Yet close above the roof, an apple tree
Known as "The Prince's Harvest"—Magic phrase!
That was *a boy's own tree,* in many ways!—
Its girth and height meet both for the caress
Of his bare legs and his ambitiousness:
And then its apples, humoring his whim,
Seemed just to fairly *hurry* ripe for him—
Even in June, impetuous as he,
They dropped to meet him, half-way up the tree.
And O their bruised sweet faces where they fell!—
And ho! the lips that feigned to "kiss them *well*"!

"The Old Sweet-Apple Tree," a stalwart, stood
In fairly sympathetic neighborhood
Of this wild princeling with his early gold
To toss about so lavishly nor hold
In bounteous hoard to overbrim at once

All Nature's lap when came the Autumn months.
Under the spacious shade of this the eyes
Of swinging children saw swift-changing skies
Of blue and green, with sunshine shot between,
And when "the old cat died" they saw but green.

And, then, there was a cherry tree.—We all
And severally will yet recall
From our lost youth, in gentlest memory,
The blessed fact—There was a cherry tree.

There was a cherry tree. Its bloomy snows
Cool even now the fevered sight that knows
No more its airy visions of pure joy—
As when you were a boy.

There was a cherry tree. The Bluejay set
His blue against its white—O blue as jet
He seemed there then!—But *now*—Whoever knew
He was so pale a blue!

There was a cherry tree—Our child-eyes saw
The miracle:—Its pure-white snows did thaw
Into a crimson fruitage, far too sweet
But for a boy to eat.

There was a cherry tree, give thanks and joy!—
There was a bloom of snow—There was a boy—
There was a Bluejay of the realest blue—
And fruit for both of you.

Then the old garden, with the apple trees
Grouped round the margin, and "a stand of bees"
By the "white-winter-pearmain"; and a row

Of currant-bushes; and a quince or so.
The old grape-arbor in the center, by
The pathway to the stable, with the sty
Behind it, and *upon* it, cootering flocks
Of pigeons,—and the cutest "martin-box"!—
Made like a sure-enough house—with roof, and
doors
And windows in it, and veranda-floors
And balusters all round it—yes, and at
Each end a chimney—painted red at that
And penciled white, to look like little bricks;
And, to cap all the builder's cunning tricks,
Two tiny little lightning-rods were run
Straight up their sides, and twinkled in the sun.
Who built it? Nay, no answer but a smile.—
It *may* be you can guess who, after while.

Home in his stall, "Old Sorrel" munched his hay
And oats and corn, and switched the flies away,
In a repose of patience good to see,
And earnest of the gentlest pedigree.
With half-pathetic eye sometimes he gazed
Upon the gambols of a colt that grazed
Around the edges of the lot outside,
And kicked at nothing suddenly, and tried
To act grown-up and graceful and high-bred,
But dropped, *k'whop!* and scraped the buggy-shed,
Leaving a tuft of woolly, foxy hair
Under the sharp end of a gate-hinge there.
Then, all ignobly scrambling to his feet
And whinnying a whinny like a bleat,

He would pursue himself around the lot
And—do the whole thing over, like as not! . . .
Ah! what a life of constant fear and dread
And flop and squawk and flight the chickens led!

Above the fences, either side, were seen
The neighbor-houses, set in plots of green
Dooryards and greener gardens, tree and wall
Alike whitewashed, an order in it all:
The scythe hooked in the tree-fork; and the spade
And hoe and rake and shovel all, when laid
Aside, were in their places, ready for
The hand of either the possessor or
Of any neighbor, welcome to the loan
Of any tool he might not chance to own.

THE OLD HOME-FOLKS

SUCH was the Child-World of the long ago—
The little world these children used to
know:—
Johnty, the oldest, and the best, perhaps,
Of the five happy little Hoosier chaps
Inhabiting this wee world all their own.—
Johnty, the leader, with his native tone
Of grave command—a general on parade
Whose each punctilious order was obeyed
By his proud followers.

But Johnty yet—
After all serious duties—could forget
The gravity of life to the extent,
At times, of kindling much astonishment
About him: With a quick, observant eye,
And mind and memory, he could supply
The tamest incident with liveliest mirth;
And at the most unlooked-for times on earth

Was wont to break into some travesty
On those around him—feats of mimicry
Of this one's trick of gesture—that one's walk—
Or this one's laugh—or that one's funny talk,—
The way "the watermelon-man" would try
His humor on town-folks that wouldn't buy;—
How he drove into town at morning—then
At dusk (alas!) how he drove out again.

Though these divertisements of Johnty's were
Hailed with a hearty glee and relish, there
Appeared a sense, on his part, of regret—
A spirit of remorse that would not let
Him rest for days thereafter.—Such times he,
As some boy said, "jist got too overly
Blame' good fer common boys like us, you know
To *'so*ciate with—'less'n we 'ud go
And jine his church!"

Next after Johnty came
His little towhead brother, Bud by name.—
And O how white his hair was—and how thick
His face with freckles,—and his ears, how quick
And curious and intrusive!—And how pale
The blue of his big eyes;—and how a tale
Of Giants, Trolls or Fairies, bulged them still
Bigger and bigger!—And when "Jack" would kill
The old "Four-headed Giant," Bud's big eyes
Were swollen truly into giant-size.
And Bud was apt in make-believes—would hear
His Grandma talk or read, with such an ear

And memory of both subject and big words,
That he would take the book up afterwards
And feign to "read aloud," with such success
As caused his truthful elders real distress.
But he *must* have *big words*—they seemed to give
Extremer range to the superlative—
That was his passion. "My Gran'ma," he said,
One evening, after listening as she read
Some heavy old historical review—
With copious explanations thereunto
Drawn out by his inquiring turn of mind,—
"My Gran'ma she's read *all* books—ever' kind
They is, 'at tells all 'bout the land an' sea
An' Nations of the Earth!—An' she is the
Historicul-est woman ever wuz!"
(Forgive the verse's chuckling as it does
In its erratic current.—Oftentimes
The little willowy water-brook of rhymes
Must falter in its music, listening to
The children laughing as they used to do.)

Who shall sing a simple ditty all about the Willow,
Dainty-fine and delicate as any bending spray
That dandles high the happy bird that flutters there to trill a
Tremulously tender song of greeting to the May.

Bravest, too, of all the trees!—none to match your daring,—
First of greens to greet the Spring and lead in leafy sheen;—
Ay, and you're the last—almost into winter wearing
Still the leaf of loyalty—still the badge of green.

Ah, my lovely Willow!—Let the Waters lilt your graces,—
They alone with limpid kisses lave your leaves above,
Flashing back your sylvan beauty, and in shady places
Peering up with glimmering pebbles, like the eyes of love.

Next, Maymie, with her hazy cloud of hair,
And the blue skies of eyes beneath it there.
Her dignified and "little lady" airs
Of never either romping up the stairs
Or falling down them; thoughtful every way
Of others first—The kind of child at play
That "gave up," for the rest, the ripest pear
Or peach or apple in the garden there
Beneath the trees where swooped the airy swing—
She pushing it, too glad for anything!
Or, in the character of hostess, she
Would entertain her friends delightfully
In her playhouse,—with strips of carpet laid
Along the garden-fence within the shade
Of the old apple trees—where from next yard
Came the two dearest friends in her regard,
The little Crawford girls, Ella and Lu—
As shy and lovely as the lilies grew
In their idyllic home,—yet sometimes they
Admitted Bud and Alex to their play,
Who did their heavier work and helped them fix
To have a "Festibul"—and brought the bricks
And built the "stove," with a real fire and all,
And stovepipe-joint for chimney, looming tall

And wonderfully smoky—even to
Their childish aspirations, as it blew
And swooped and swirled about them till their sight
Was feverish even as their high delight.

Then Alex, with his freckles, and his freaks
Of temper, and the peach-bloom of his cheeks,
And *"amber-colored* hair"—his mother said
'Twas that, when others laughed and called it *"red"*
And Alex threw things at them—till they'd call
A truce, agreeing "'t'uzn't red *ut-tall!"*
But Alex was affectionate beyond
The average child, and was extremely fond
Of the paternal relatives of his,
Of whom he once made estimate like this:—
"I'm only got *two* brothers,—but my *Pa*
He's got most brothers'n you ever saw!—
He's got *seben* brothers!—Yes, an' they're all my
Seben Uncles!—Uncle John, an' Jim,—an' I
Got Uncle George, an' Uncle Andy, too,
An' Uncle Frank, an' Uncle Joe.—An' you
Know Uncle *Mart.*—An', all but *him,* they're great
Big mens!—An' nen's Aunt Sarah—she makes
eight!—
I'm got *eight* uncles!—'cept Aunt Sarah *can't*
Be ist my *uncle* 'cause she's ist my *a'nt!"*

Then, next to Alex—and the last indeed
Of these five little ones of whom you read—
Was baby Lizzie, with her velvet lisp,—
As though her elfin lips had caught some wisp

Of floss between them as they strove with speech,
Which ever seemed just in, yet out of, reach—
Though what her lips missed, her dark eyes could say
With looks that made her meaning clear as day.
And, knowing now the children, you must know
The father and the mother they loved so:—
The father was a swarthy man, black-eyed,
Black-haired, and high of forehead; and, beside
The slender little mother, seemed in truth
A very king of men—since, from his youth,
To his hale manhood *now*—(worthy as then,—
A lawyer and a leading citizen
Of the proud little town and county-seat—
His hopes his neighbors', and their fealty sweet)—
He had known outdoor labor—rain and shine—
Bleak Winter, and bland Summer—foul and fine.
So Nature had ennobled him and set
Her symbol on him like a coronet:
His lifted brow, and frank, reliant face—
Superior of stature as of grace,—
Even the children by the spell were wrought
Up to heroics of their simple thought,
And saw him, trim of build, and lithe and straight
And tall, almost, as at the pasture-gate
The towering ironweed the scythe had spared
For their sakes, when The Hired Man declared
It would grow on till it became a *tree,*
With cocoanuts and monkeys in—maybe!

Yet, though the children, in their pride and awe
And admiration of the father, saw
A being so exalted—even more
Like adoration was the love they bore
The gentle mother.—Her mild, plaintive face
Was purely fair, and haloed with a grace
And sweetness luminous when joy made glad
Her features with a smile; or saintly sad
As twilight, fell the sympathetic gloom
Of any childish grief, or as a room
Were darkened suddenly, the curtain drawn
Across the window and the sunshine gone.
Her brow, below her fair hair's glimmering strands,
Seemed meetest resting-place for blessing hands
Or holiest touches of soft finger-tips
And little rose-leaf cheeks and dewy lips.

Though heavy household tasks were pitiless,
No little waist or coat or checkered dress
But knew her needle's deftness; and no skill
Matched hers in shaping plait or flounce or frill;
Or fashioning, in complicate design,
All rich embroideries of leaf and vine,
With tiniest twining tendril,—bud and bloom
And fruit, so like, one's fancy caught perfume
And dainty touch and taste of them, to see
Their semblance wrought in such rare verity.

Shrined in her sanctity of home and love,
And love's fond service and reward thereof,

Restore her thus, O blessed Memory!—
Throned in her rocking-chair, and on her knee
Her sewing—her work-basket on the floor
Beside her,—Spring-time through the open door
Balmily stealing in and all about
The room; the bees' dim hum, and the far shout
And laughter of the children at their play,
And neighbor children from across the way
Calling in gleeful challenge—save alone
One boy whose voice sends back no answering
tone—
The boy, prone on the floor, above a book
Of pictures, with a rapt, ecstatic look—
Even as the mother's, by the selfsame spell,
Is lifted, with a light ineffable—
As though her senses caught no mortal cry,
But heard, instead, some poem going by.

The Child-heart is so strange a little thing—
So mild—so timorously shy and small,—
When *grown-up* hearts throb, it goes scampering
Behind the wall, nor dares peer out at all!—
It is the veriest mouse
That hides in any house—
So wild a little thing is any Child-heart!

Child-heart!—mild heart!—
Ho, my little wild heart!—
Come up here to me out o' the dark,
Or let me come to you!

So lorn at times the Child-heart needs must be,
With never one maturer heart for friend
And comrade, whose tear-ripened sympathy

And love might lend it comfort to the end,—
Whose yearnings, aches and stings,
Over poor little things
Were pitiful as ever any Child-heart.

Child-heart!—mild heart!—
Ho, my little wild heart!—
Come up here to me out o' the dark,
Or let me come to you!

Times, too, the little Child-heart must be glad—
Being so young, nor knowing, as *we* know,
The fact from fantasy, the good from bad,
The joy from woe, the—*all* that hurts us so!
What wonder then that thus
It hides away from us?—
So weak a little thing is any Child-heart!

Child-heart!—mild heart!—
Ho, my little wild heart!—
Come up here to me out o' the dark,
Or let me come to you!

Nay, little Child-heart, you have never need
To fear *us;*—we are weaker far than you—
'Tis *we* who should be fearful—we indeed
Should hide us, too, as darkly as you do,—
Safe, as yourself, withdrawn,
Hearing the World roar on
Too wilful, woeful, awful for the Child-heart!

Child-heart!—mild heart!—
Ho, my little wild heart!—
Come up here to me out o' the dark,
Or let me come to you!

The clock chats on confidingly; a rose
Taps at the window, as the sunlight throws
A brilliant, jostling checkerwork of shine
And shadow, like a Persian-loom design,
Across the home-made carpet—fades,—and then
The dear old colors are themselves again.
Sounds drop in visiting from everywhere—
The bluebird's and the robin's trill are there,
Their sweet liquidity diluted some
By dewy orchard-spaces they have come:
Sounds of the town, too, and the great highway—
The Mover-wagons' rumble, and the neigh
Of over-traveled horses, and the bleat
Of sheep and low of cattle through the street—
A Nation's thoroughfare of hopes and fears,
First blazed by the heroic pioneers
Who gave up old-home idols and set face
Toward the unbroken West, to found a race
And tame a wilderness now mightier than
All peoples and all tracts American.

Blent with all outer sounds, the sounds within:—
In mild remoteness falls the household din
Of porch and kitchen: the dull jar and thump
Of churning; and the "glung-glung" of the pump,
With sudden pad and skurry of bare feet
Of little outlaws, in from field or street:
The clang of kettle,—rasp of damper-ring
And bang of cook-stove door—and everything
That jingles in a busy kitchen lifts

Its individual wrangling voice and drifts
In sweetest tinny, coppery, pewtery tone
Of music hungry ear has ever known
In wildest famished yearning and conceit
Of youth, to just cut loose and eat and eat!—
The zest of hunger still incited on
To childish desperation by long-drawn
Breaths of hot, steaming, wholesome things that
stew
And blubber, and uptilt the pot-lids, too,
Filling the sense with zestful rumors of
The dear old-fashioned dinners children love:
Redolent savorings of home-cured meats,
Potatoes, beans and cabbage; turnips, beets
And parsnips—rarest composite entire
That ever pushed a mortal child's desire
To madness by new-grated fresh, keen, sharp
Horseradish—tang that sets the lips awarp
And watery, anticipating all
The cloyed sweets of the glorious festival.—
Still add the cinnamony, spicy scents
Of clove, nutmeg, and myriad condiments
In like-alluring whiffs that prophesy
Of sweltering pudding, cake, and custard-pie—
The swooning-sweet aroma haunting all
The house—up-stairs and down—porch, parlor, hall
And sitting-room—invading even where
The Hired Man sniffs it in the orchard-air,
And pauses in his pruning of the trees
To note the sun minutely and to—sneeze.

Then Cousin Rufus comes—the children hear
His hale voice in the old hall, ringing clear
As any bell. Always he came with song
Upon his lips and all the happy throng
Of echoes following him, even as the crowd
Of his admiring little kinsmen—proud
To have a cousin *grown*—and yet as young
Of soul and cheery as the songs he sung.

He was a student of the law—intent
Soundly to win success, with all it meant;
And so he studied—even as he played,—
With all his heart: And so it was he made
His gallant fight for fortune—through all stress
Of battle bearing him with cheeriness
And wholesome valor.

And the children had
Another relative who kept them glad
And joyous by his very merry ways—
As blithe and sunny as the summer days,—
Their father's youngest brother—Uncle Mart.
The old "Arabian Nights" he knew by heart—
"Baron Munchausen," too; and likewise "The
Swiss Family Robinson."—And when these three
Gave out, as he rehearsed them, he could go
Straight on in the same line—a steady flow
Of arabesque invention that his good
Old mother never clearly understood.
He *was* to be a *printer*—wanted, though,

To be an *actor.*—But the world was "show"
Enough for *him,*—theatric, airy, gay,—
Each day to him was jolly as a play.
And some poetic symptoms, too, in sooth,
Were certain.—And, from his apprentice youth,
He joyed in verse-quotations—which he took
Out of the old "Type Foundry Specimen Book."
He craved and courted most the favor of
The children.—They were foremost in his love;
And pleasing *them,* he pleased his own boy-heart
And kept it young and fresh in every part.
So was it he devised for them and wrought
To life his quaintest, most romantic thought:—
Like some lone castaway in alien seas,
He built a house up in the apple trees,
Out in the corner of the garden, where
No man-devouring native, prowling there,
Might pounce upon them in the dead o' night—
For lo, their little ladder, slim and light,
They drew up after them. And it was known
That Uncle Mart slipped up sometimes alone
And drew the ladder in, to lie and moon
Over some novel all the afternoon.
And one time Johnty, from the crowd below,—
Outraged to find themselves deserted so—
Threw bodily their old black cat up in
The airy fastness, with much yowl and din
Resulting, while a wild periphery
Of cat went circling to another tree,
And, in impassioned outburst, Uncle Mart
Loomed up, and thus relieved his tragic heart:

"'Hence, long-tailed, ebon-eyed, nocturnal ranger!
What led thee hither 'mongst the types and cases?
Didst thou not know that running midnight races
O'er standing types was fraught with imminent danger?
Did hunger lead thee—didst thou think to find
Some rich old cheese to fill thy hungry maw?
Vain hope! for none but literary jaw
Can masticate our cookery for the mind!'"

So likewise when, with lordly air and grace,
He strode to dinner, with a tragic face
With ink-spots on it from the office, he
Would aptly quote more "Specimen-poetry"—
Perchance like "'Labor's bread is sweet to eat,
(*Ahem!*) And toothsome is the toiler's meat.'"

Ah, could you see them *all,* at lull of noon!—
A sort of *boisterous* lull, with clink of spoon
And clatter of deflecting knife, and plate
Dropped saggingly, with its all-bounteous weight,
And dragged in place voraciously; and then
Pent exclamations, and the lull again.—
The garland of glad faces round the board—
Each member of the family restored
To his or her place, with an extra chair
Or two for the chance guests so often there.—
The father's farmer-client, brought home from
The court room, though he "didn't *want* to come
Tel he jist saw he *hat* to!" he'd explain,
Invariably, time and time again,

To the pleased wife and hostess, as she pressed
Another cup of coffee on the guest.—
Or there was Johnty's special chum, perchance,
Or Bud's, or both—each childish countenance
Lit with a higher glow of youthful glee,
To be together thus unbrokenly,—
Jim Offutt, or Eck Skinner, or George Carr—
The very nearest chums of Bud's these are,—
So, very probably, *one* of the three,
At least, is there with Bud, or *ought* to be.
Like interchange the town-boys each had
known—
His playmate's dinner better than his own—
Yet blest that he was ever made to stay
At *Almon Keefer's, any* blessed day,
For *any* meal! . . . Visions of biscuits, hot
And flaky-perfect, with the golden blot
Of molten butter for the center, clear,
Through pools of clover-honey—*dear-o-dear!*—
With creamy milk for its divine "farewell":
And then, if any one delectable
Might yet exceed in sweetness, O restore
The cherry-cobbler of the days of yore
Made only by Al Keefer's mother!—Why,
The very thought of it ignites the eye
Of memory with rapture—cloys the lip
Of longing, till it seems to ooze and drip
With veriest juice and stain and overwaste
Of that most sweet delirium of taste
That ever visited the childish tongue,
Or proved, as now, the sweetest thing unsung.

Ah, Almon Keefer! what a boy you were,
With your back-tilted hat and careless hair,
And open, honest, fresh, fair face and eyes
With their all-varying looks of pleased surprise
And joyous interest in flower and tree,
And poising humming-bird, and maundering bee.

The fields and woods he knew; the tireless tramp
With gun and dog; and the night-fisher's camp—
No other boy, save Bee Lineback, had won
Such brilliant mastery of rod and gun.
Even in his earliest childhood had he shown
These traits that marked him as his father's own.
Dogs all paid Almon honor and bow-wowed
Allegiance, let him come in any crowd
Of rabbit-hunting town-boys, even though
His own dog "Sleuth" rebuked their acting so
With jealous snarls and growlings.

But the best
Of Almon's virtues—leading all the rest—
Was his great love of books, and skill as well
In reading them aloud, and by the spell
Thereof enthralling his mute listeners, as
They grouped about him in the orchard-grass,
Hinging their bare shins in the mottled shine
And shade, as they lay prone, or stretched supine
Beneath their favorite tree, with dreamy eyes
And Argo-fancies voyaging the skies.
"Tales of the Ocean" was the name of one
Old dog's-eared book that was surpassed by none

Of all the glorious list.—Its back was gone,
But its vitality went bravely on
In such delicious tales of land and sea
As may not ever perish utterly.
Of still more dubious caste, "Jack Sheppard" drew
Full admiration; and "Dick Turpin," too.
And, painful as the fact is to convey,
In certain lurid tales of their own day,
These boys found thieving heroes and outlaws
They hailed with equal fervor of applause:
"The League of the Miami"—why, the name
Alone was fascinating—is the same,
In memory, this venerable hour
Of moral wisdom shorn of all its power,
As it unblushingly reverts to when
The old barn was "the Cave," and hears again
The signal blown, outside the buggy-shed—
The drowsy guard within uplifts his head,
And *"'Who goes there?'"* is called, in bated breath—
The challenge answered in a hush of death,—
"Sh!—*'Barney Gray!'*" And then *"'What do you seek?'"*
"'Stables of The League!'" the voice comes spent and weak,
For, ha! the *Law* is on the "Chieftain's" trail—
Tracked to his very lair!—Well, what avail?
The "secret entrance" opens—closes.—So
The "Robber-Captain" thus outwits his foe;
And, safe once more within his "cavern-halls,"

He shakes his clenched fist at the warped plank-
walls
And mutters his defiance through the cracks
At the balked Enemy's retreating backs
As the loud horde flees pell-mell down the lane,
And—*Almon Keefer* is himself again!

Excepting few, they were not books indeed
Of deep import that Almon chose to read;—
Less fact than fiction.—Much he favored those—
If not in poetry, in hectic prose—
That made our native Indian a wild,
Feathered and fine-preened hero that a child
Could recommend as just about the thing
To make a god of, or at least a king.

Aside from Almon's own books—two or three—
His store of lore The Township Library
Supplied him weekly: All the books with "or's"
Subtitled—lured him—after "Indian Wars,"
And "Life of Daniel Boone," —not to include
Some few books spiced with humor,—"Robin
Hood"
And rare "Don Quixote."—And one time he took
"Dadd's Cattle Doctor." . . . How he hugged the
book
And hurried homeward, with internal glee
And humorous spasms of expectancy!—
All this confession—as he promptly made
It, the day later, writhing in the shade
Of the old apple tree with Johnty and

Bud, Noey Bixler, and The Hired Hand—
Was quite as funny as the book was not. . . .
O Wonderland of wayward Childhood! what
An easy, breezy realm of summer calm
And dreamy gleam and gloom and bloom and balm
Thou art!—The Lotus-Land the poet sung,
It is the Child-World while the heart beats
young. . . .

While the heart beats young!—O the splendor of the
Spring,
With all her dewy jewels on, is not so fair a thing!
The fairest, rarest morning of the blossom-time of May
Is not so sweet a season as the season of to-day
While Youth's diviner climate folds and holds us, close
caressed
As we feel our mothers with us by the touch of face and
breast;—
Our bare feet in the meadows, and our fancies up among
The airy clouds of morning—while the heart beats young.

While the heart beats young and our pulses leap and dance,
With every day a holiday and life a glad romance,—
We hear the birds with wonder, and with wonder watch
their flight—
Standing still the more enchanted, both of hearing and
of sight,
When they have vanished wholly,—for, in fancy, wing-to-
wing
We fly to Heaven with them; and, returning, still we sing
The praises of this *lower* Heaven with tireless voice and
tongue,
Even as the Master sanctions—while the heart beats young.

While the heart beats young!—While the heart beats young!
O green and gold old Earth of ours, with azure overhung
And looped with rainbows!—grant us yet this grassy lap of thine—
We would be still thy children, through the shower and the shine!
So pray we, lisping, whispering, in childish love and trust,
With our beseeching hands and faces lifted from the dust
By fervor of the poem, all unwritten and unsung,
Thou givest us in answer, while the heart beats young.

Another hero of those youthful years
Returns, as Noey Bixler's name appears.
And Noey—if in any special way—
Was notably good-natured.—Work or play
He entered into with selfsame delight—
A wholesome interest that made him quite
As many friends among the old as young,—
So everywhere were Noey's praises sung.

And he was awkward, fat and overgrown,
With a round full-moon face, that fairly shone
As though to meet the simile's demand.
And, cumbrous though he seemed, both eye and hand
Were dowered with the discernment and deft skill
Of the true artisan: He shaped at will,
In his old father's shop, on rainy days,
Little toy-wagons, and curved-runner sleighs;
The trimmest bows and arrows—fashioned, too,
Of "seasoned timber," such as Noey knew

How to select, prepare, and then complete,
And call his little friends in from the street.
"The very *best* bow," Noey used to say,
"Hain't made o' ash ner hick'ry thataway!—
But you git *mulberry*—the *bearin'*-tree,
Now mind ye! and you fetch the piece to me,
And lemme git it *seasoned;* then, i gum!
I'll make a bow 'at you kin brag on some!
Er—ef you can't git *mulberry,*—you bring
Me a' old *locus'* hitch-post, and, i jing!
I'll make a bow o' *that* 'at *common* bows
Won't dast to pick on ner turn up their nose!"

And Noey knew the woods, and all the trees
And thickets, plants and myriad mysteries
Of swamp and bottom-land. And he knew where
The ground-hog hid, and why located there.—
He knew all animals that burrowed, swam,
Or lived in tree-tops: And, by race and dam,
He knew the choicest, safest deeps wherein
Fish-traps might flourish nor provoke the sin
Of theft in some chance peeking, prying sneak,
Or town-boy, prowling up and down the creek.
All four-pawed creatures tamable—he knew
Their outer and their inner natures too;
While they, in turn, were drawn to him as by
Some subtle recognition of a tie
Of love, as true as truth from end to end,
Between themselves and this strange human friend.
The same with birds—he knew them every one

And he could "name them, too, without a gun."
No wonder *Johnty* loved him, even to
The verge of worship.—Noey led him through
The art of trapping redbirds—yes, and taught
Him how to keep them when he had them caught—
What food they needed, and just where to swing
The cage, if he expected them to *sing*.

And *Bud* loved Noey, for the little pair
Of stilts he made him; or the stout old hair
Trunk Noey put on wheels, and laid a track
Of scantling-railroad for it in the back
Part of the barn-lot; or the crossbow, made
Just like a gun, which deadly weapon laid
Against his shoulder as he aimed, and—*"Sping!"*
He'd hear the rusty old nail zoon and sing—
And *zip!* your Mr. Bluejay's wing would drop
A farewell-feather from the old tree-top!

And *Maymie* loved him, for the very small
But perfect carriage for her favorite doll—
A *lady's* carriage—not a *baby*-cab,—
But oil-cloth top, and two seats, lined with drab
And trimmed with white lace-paper from a case
Of shaving-soap his uncle bought some place
At auction once.

And *Alex* loved him yet
The best, when Noey brought him, for a pet,
A little flying-squirrel, with great eyes—

Big as a child's: And, childlike otherwise,
It was at first a timid, tremulous, coy,
Retiring little thing that dodged the boy
And tried to keep in Noey's pocket;—till,
In time responsive to his patient will,
It became wholly docile, and content
With its new master, as he came and went,—
The squirrel clinging flatly to his breast,
Or sometimes scampering its craziest
Around his body spirally, and then
Down to his very heels and up again.

And *Little Lizzie* loved him, as a bee
Loves a great ripe red apple—utterly.
For Noey's ruddy morning-face she drew
The window-blind, and tapped the window, too;
Afar she hailed his coming, as she heard
His tuneless whistling—sweet as any bird
It seemed to her, the one lame bar or so
Of old "Wait for the Wagon"—hoarse and low
The sound was,—so that, all about the place,
Folks joked and said that Noey "whistled bass"—
The light remark originally made
By Cousin Rufus, who knew notes, and played
The flute with nimble skill, and taste as well,
And, critical as he was musical,
Regarded Noey's constant whistling thus
"Phenomenally unmelodious."
Likewise when Uncle Mart, who shared the love
Of jest with Cousin Rufus hand-in-glove,

Said "Noey couldn't whistle *'Bonny Doon'*
Even! and, *he'd* bet, couldn't carry a tune
If it had handles to it!"

—But forgive
The deviations here so fugitive,
And turn again to Little Lizzie, whose
High estimate of Noey we shall choose
Above all others.—And to her he was
Particularly lovable because
He laid the woodland's harvest at her feet.—
He brought her wild strawberries, honey-sweet
And dewy-cool, in mats of greenest moss
And leaves, all woven over and across
With tender, biting "tongue-grass," and "sheep-sour,"
And twin-leaved beech-mast, pranked with bud and flower
Of every gipsy-blossom of the wild,
Dark, tangled forest, dear to any child.—
All these in season. Nor could barren, drear,
White and stark-featured Winter interfere
With Noey's rare resources: Still the same
He blithely whistled through the snow and came
Beneath the window with a Fairy sled;
And Little Lizzie, bundled heels-and-head,
He took on such excursions of delight
As even "Old Santy" with his reindeer might
Have envied her! And, later, when the snow
Was softening toward Spring-time and the glow

Of steady sunshine smote upon it,—then
Came the magician Noey yet again—
While all the children were away a day
Or two at Grandma's!—and behold when they
Got home once more;—there, towering taller than
The doorway—stood a mighty, old Snow-Man!

A thing of peerless art—a masterpiece
Doubtless unmatched by even classic Greece
In heyday of Praxiteles.—Alone
It loomed in lordly grandeur all its own.
And steadfast, too, for weeks and weeks it stood,
The admiration of the neighborhood
As well as of the children Noey sought
Only to honor in the work he wrought.
The traveler paid it tribute, as he passed
Along the highway—paused and, turning, cast
A lingering, last look—as though to take
A vivid print of it, for memory's sake,
To lighten all the empty, aching miles
Beyond with brighter fancies, hopes and smiles.
The cynic put aside his biting wit
And tacitly declared in praise of it;
And even the apprentice-poet of the town
Rose to impassioned heights, and then sat down
And penned a panegyric scroll of rhyme
That made the Snow-Man famous for all time.

And though, as now, the ever warmer sun
Of summer had so melted and undone
The perishable figure that—alas!—

Not even in dwindled white against the grass
Was left its latest and minutest ghost,
The children yet—*materially,* almost—
Beheld it—circled round it hand-in-hand—
(Or rather round the place it used to stand)—
With "Ring-a-round-a-rosy! Bottle full
O' posy!" and, with shriek and laugh, would pull
From seeming contact with it—just as when
It was the *real-est* of old Snow-Men!

Even in such a scene of senseless play
The children were surprised one summer day
By a strange man who called across the fence,
Inquiring for their father's residence;
And, being answered that this was the place,
Opened the gate, and, with a radiant face,
Came in and sat down with them in the shade
And waited—till the absent father made
His noon appearance, with a warmth and zest
That told he had no ordinary guest
In this man whose low-spoken name he knew
At once, demurring as the stranger drew
A stuffy note-book out, and turned and set
A big fat finger on a page, and let
The writing thereon testify instead
Of further speech. And as the father read
All silently, the curious children took
Exacting inventory both of book
And man:—He wore a long-napped white fur hat
Pulled firmly on his head, and under that
Rather long silvery hair, or iron-gray—

For he was not an old man,—anyway,
Not beyond sixty. And he wore a pair
Of square-framed spectacles—or rather there
Were two more than a pair,—the extra two
Flared at the corners, at the eyes' side-view,
In as redundant vision as the eyes
Of grasshoppers or bees or dragon-flies.
Later the children heard the father say
He was "A Noted Traveler," and would stay
Some days with them.—In which time host and
guest
Discussed, alone, in deepest interest,
Some vague, mysterious matter that defied
The wistful children, loitering outside
The spare-room door. There Bud acquired a quite
New list of big words—such as "Disunite,"
And "Shibboleth," and "Aristocracy,"
And "Juggernaut," and "Squatter Sovereignty,"
And "Antislavery," "Emancipate,"
"Irrepressible Conflict," and "The Great
Battle of Armageddon"—obviously
A pamphlet brought from Washington, D. C.,
And spread among such friends as might occur
Of like views with "The Noted Traveler."

A PROSPECTIVE VISIT

WHILE *any* day was notable and dear
That gave the children Noey, history here
Records his advent emphasized indeed
With sharp italics, as he came to feed
The stock one special morning, fair and bright,
When Johnty and Bud met him, with delight
Unusual even as their extra dress—
Garbed as for holiday, with much excess
Of proud self-consciousness and vain conceit
In their new finery.—Far up the street
They called to Noey, as he came, that they,
As promised, both were going back that day
To *his* house with him!

And by time that each
Had one of Noey's hands—ceasing their speech
And coyly anxious, in their new attire,
To wake the comment of their mute desire,—
Noey seemed rendered voiceless. Quite a while
They watched him furtively.—He seemed to smile
As though he would conceal it; and they saw
Him look away, and his lips purse and draw
In curious, twitching spasms, as though he might

Be whispering,—while in his eye the white
Predominated strangely.—Then the spell
Gave way, and his pent speech burst audible:
"They wuz two stylish little boys,
and they wuz mighty bold ones,
Had two new pairs o' britches made
out o' their Daddy's old ones!"
And at the inspirational outbreak,
Both joker and his victims seemed to take
An equal share of laughter,—and all through
Their morning visit kept recurring to
The funny words and jingle of the rhyme
That just kept getting funnier all the time.

AT NOEY'S HOUSE

AT Noey's house—when they arrived with him—
How snug seemed everything, and neat and trim:
The little picket-fence, and little gate—
Its little pulley, and its little weight,—
All glib as clockwork, as it clicked behind
Them, on the little red-brick pathway, lined
With little paint-keg vases and tea-pots
Of wee moss-blossoms and forget-me-nots:
And in the windows, either side the door,
Were ranged as many little boxes more
Of like old-fashioned larkspurs, pinks and moss
And fern and phlox; while up and down across
Them rioted the morning-glory vines
On taut-set cotton strings, whose snowy lines
Whipped in and out and under the bright green
Like basting-threads; and, here and there between
A showy, shiny hollyhock would flare
Its pink among the white and purple there.—
And still behind the vines, the children saw
A strange, bleached, wistful face that seemed to draw

A vague, indefinite sympathy. A face
It was of some newcomer to the place.—
In explanation, Noey, briefly, said
That it was "Jason," as he turned and led
The little fellows round the house to show
Them his menagerie of pets. And so
For quite a time the face of the strange guest
Was partially forgotten, as they pressed
About the squirrel-cage and rousted both
The lazy inmates out, though wholly loath
To whirl the wheel for them.—And then with awe
They walked round Noey's big pet owl, and saw
Him film his great, clear, liquid eyes and stare
And turn and turn and turn his head round there
The same way they kept circling—as though he
Could turn it one way thus eternally.

Behind the kitchen, then, with special pride
Noey stirred up a terrapin inside
The rain-barrel where he lived, with three or four
Little mud-turtles of a size not more
In neat circumference than the tiny toy
Dumb-watches worn by every little boy.

Then, back of the old shop, beneath the tree
Of "rusty-coats," as Noey called them, he
Next took the boys, to show his favorite new
Pet coon—pulled rather coyly into view
Up through a square hole in the bottom of
An old inverted tub he bent above,

Yanking a little chain, with "Hey! you, sir!
Here's *comp'ny* come to see you, Bolivur!"
Explanatory, he went on to say,
"I named him *Bolivur* jes' thisaway,—
He looks so *round* and *ovalish* and *fat,*
'Peared-like no other name 'ud fit but that."

Here Noey's father called and sent him on
Some errand. "Wait," he said—"I won't be gone
A half a' hour.—Take Bud, and go on in
Where Jason is, tel I git back ag'in."

Whoever *Jason* was, they found him there
Still at the front-room window.—By his chair
Leaned a new pair of crutches; and from one
Knee down, a leg was bandaged.—"Jason done
That-air with one o' these-'ere tools *we* call
A *'shin-hoe'*—but a *foot-adze* mostly all
Hardware-store-keepers calls 'em."—(*Noey* made
This explanation later.)
Jason paid
But little notice to the boys as they
Came in the room:—An idle volume lay
Upon his lap—the only book in sight—
And Johnty read the title,—"Light, More Light,
There's Danger in the Dark,"—though *first* and
best—
In fact, the *whole* of Jason's interest
Seemed centered on a little *dog*—one pet
Of Noey's all uncelebrated yet—

Though *Jason,* certainly, avowed his worth,
And niched him over all the pets on earth—
As the observant Johnty would relate
The *Jason*-episode, and imitate
The all-enthusiastic speech and air
Of Noey's kinsman and his tribute there:—

"That little dog 'ud scratch at that door
And go on a-whinin' two hours before
He'd ever let up! *There!*—Jane: Let him in.—
(Hah, there, you little rat!) Look at him grin!
Come down off o' that!—
W'y, look at him! (*Drat*
You! you-rascal-you!)—bring me that hat!
Look *out!*—He'll snap *you!*—*He* wouldn't let
You take it away from him, now you kin bet!
That little rascal's jist natchurly mean.—
I tell you, I *never* (*Git out!!*), never seen
A *spunkier* little rip! (*Scratch to git in,*
And *now* yer a-scratchin' to git *out* ag'in!
Jane: Let him out.) Now, watch him from here
Out through the winder!—You notice one ear
Kind o' *in*side-*out,* like he holds it?—Well,
He's got a *tick* in it—*I* kin tell!
Yes, and he's cunnin'—
Jist watch him a-runnin',
Sidelin'—see!—like he ain't *'plum'd true'*
And legs don't 'track' as they'd ort to do!—
Ploughin' his nose through the weeds—i jing!
Ain't he jist cuter'n anything!

"W'y, that little dog's got *grown*-people's sense;—
See how he gits out under the fence?—
And watch him a-whettin' his hind legs 'fore
His dead square run of a mile'd er more—
'Cause *Noey's* a-comin', and Trip allus knows
When *Noey's* a-comin'—and off he goes!—
Putts out to meet him and—*There they come now!*
Well-sir! it's raially singalar how
That dog kin *tell,*—
But he knows as well
When Noey's a-comin' home!—Reckon his *smell*
'Ud carry two mile'd?—You needn't to *smile*—
He runs to meet *him,* ever'-once-'n-a-while,
Two mile'd and over—when he's slipped away
And left him at home here, as he's done to-day—
'Thout ever knowin' where Noey wuz goin'—
But that little dog allus hits the right way!
Hear him a-whinin' and scratchin' ag'in?—
(*Little tormentin' fice!*) Jane: Let him in.

"—You say he ain't *there?*—
Well now, I declare!—
Lem*me* limp out and look! . . . I wunder where—
Heuh, Trip!—*Heuh,* Trip!—*Heuh,* Trip! . . .
There—
There he is!—Little sneak!—What-a'-you-'bout?—
There he is—quiled up as meek as a mouse,
His tail turnt up like a tea-kittle spout,
A-sunnin' hiss'f at the side o' the house!
Next time you scratch, sir, you'll half to git in,

My fine little feller, the best way you kin!
—Noey *he* learns him sich capers!—And they—
Both of 'em's ornrier every day!—
Both tantalizin' and meaner'n sin—
Allus a—(*Listen there!*)—Jane: Let him in.

"—Oh! yer so *innocent!* hangin' yer head!—
(Drat ye! you'd *better* git under the bed!)
. . . Listen at that!—
He's tackled the cat!—
Hah, there! you little rip! come out o' that!—
Git yer blame' little eyes scratched out
'Fore you know what yer talkin' about!—
Here! come away from there!—(Let him alone—
He'll snap *you,* I tell ye, as quick as a bone!)
Hi, Trip!—*Hey,* here!—What-a'-you-'bout!—
Oo! ouch! 'Ll, I'll be blamed!—*Blast ye!* GIT OUT!
. . . Oh, it ain't nothin'—jist *scratched* me, you see.—
Hadn't no idy he'd try to bite *me!*
Plague take him!—Bet he'll not try *that* ag'in!—
Hear him yelp.—(*Pore feller!*) Jane: Let him in."

THE LOEHRS AND THE HAMMONDS

"HEY, Bud! *O* Bud!" rang out a gleeful call,—
"The Loehrs is come to your house!" And a small
But very much elated little chap,
In snowy linen suit and tasseled cap,
Leaped from the back fence just across the street
From Bixlers', and came galloping to meet
His equally delighted little pair
Of playmates, hurrying out to join him there—
"The Loehrs is come!—The Loehrs is come!" his glee
Augmented to a pitch of ecstasy
Communicated wildly, till the cry
"The Loehrs is come!" in chorus quavered high
And thrilling as some pæan of challenge or
Soul-stirring chant of armied conqueror.
And who this *avant-courier* of "the Loehrs"?—
This happiest of all boys out o' doors—
Who but Will Pierson, with his heart's excess
Of summer warmth and light and breeziness!
"From our front winder I 'uz first to see
'Em all a-drivin' into town!" bragged he—
"An' seen 'em turnin' up the alley where

Your folks lives at. An' John an' Jake wuz there
Both in the wagon;—yes, an' Willy, too;
An' Mary—yes, an' Edith—with bran-new
An' purtiest-trimmed hats 'at ever wuz!—
An' Susan, an' Janey.—An' the *Hammond-uz*
In their fine buggy 'at they're ridin' roun'
So much, all over an' aroun' the town
An' *ever*'wheres,—them *city* people who's
A-visutin' at Loehrs-uz!"

Glorious news!—
Even more glorious when verified
In the boys' welcoming eyes of love and pride,
As one by one they greeted their old friends
And neighbors.—Nor until their earth-life ends
Will that bright memory become less bright
Or dimmed indeed.

. . . Again, at candle-light,
The faces all are gathered. And how glad
The Mother's features, knowing that she had
Her dear, sweet Mary Loehr back again.—
She always was so proud of her; and then
The dear girl, in return, was happy, too,
And with a heart as loving, kind and true
As that maturer one which seemed to blend
As one the love of mother and of friend.
From time to time, as hand in hand they sat,
The fair girl whispered something low, whereat
A tender, wistful look would gather in
The mother-eyes; and then there would begin
A sudden cheerier talk, directed to

The stranger guests—the man and woman who,
It was explained, were coming now to make
Their temporary home in town for sake
Of the wife's somewhat failing health. Yes, they
Were city people, seeking rest this way,
The man said, answering a query made
By some well-meaning neighbor—with a shade
Of apprehension in the answer. . . . No,—
They had no *children.* As he answered so,
The man's arm went about his wife, and she
Leaned toward him, with her eyes lit prayerfully:
Then she arose—he following—and bent
Above the little sleeping innocent
Within the cradle at the mother's side—
He patting her, all silent, as she cried.—
Though, haply, in the silence that ensued,
His musings made melodious interlude.

In the warm, health-giving weather
  My poor pale wife and I
Drive up and down the little town
  And the pleasant roads thereby:
Out in the wholesome country
  We wind, from the main highway,
In through the wood's green solitudes—
  Fair as the Lord's own Day.

We have lived so long together,
  And joyed and mourned as one,
That each with each, with a look for speech,
  Or a touch, may talk as none
But Love's elect may comprehend—
  Why, the touch of her hand on mine
Speaks volume-wise, and the smile of her eyes,
  To me, is a song divine.

There are many places that lure us:—
"The Old Wood Bridge" just west
Of town we know—and the creek below,
And the banks the boys love best:
And "Beech Grove," too, on the hilltop;
And "The Haunted House" beyond,
With its roof half off, and its old pump-trough
Adrift in the roadside pond.

We find our way to "The Marshes"—
At least where they used to be;
And "The Old Camp Grounds"; and "The Indian Mounds,"
And the trunk of "The Council Tree":
We have crunched and splashed through "Flint-bed Ford";
And at "Old Big Bee-gum Spring"
We have stayed the cup, half lifted up,
Hearing the redbird sing.

And then, there is "Wesley Chapel,"
With its little graveyard, lone
At the crossroads there, though the sun sets fair
On wild rose, mound and stone. . . .
A wee bed under the willows—
My wife's hand on my own—
And our horse stops, too. . . . And we hear the coo
Of a dove in undertone.

The dusk, the dew, and the silence!
"Old Charley" turns his head
Homeward then by the pike again,
Though never a word is said—
One more stop, and a lingering one—
After the fields and farms,—
At the old Toll-Gate, with the woman await
With a little girl in her arms.

The silence sank—Floretty came to call
The children in the kitchen, where they all
Went helter-skeltering with shout and din
Enough to drown most sanguine silence in,—
For well indeed they knew that summons meant
Taffy and pop-corn—so with cheers they went.

THE HIRED MAN AND FLORETTY

THE Hired Man's supper, which he sat before,
In near reach of the wood-box, the stove-door
And one leaf of the kitchen-table, was
Somewhat belated, and in lifted pause
His dexterous knife was balancing a bit
Of fried mush near the port awaiting it.

At the glad children's advent—gladder still
To find *him* there—"Jest tickled fit to kill
To see ye all!" he said, with unctuous cheer.—
"I'm tryin'-like to he'p Floretty here
To git things cleared away and give ye room
Accordin' to yer stren'th. But I p'sume
It's a pore boarder, as the poet says,
That quarrels with his victuals, so I guess
I'll take another wedge o' that-air cake,
Florett', that you're a-*learnin'* how to bake."
He winked and feigned to swallow painfully.—
"Jest 'fore ye all come in, Floretty she
Was boastin' 'bout her *biscuits*—and they *air*
As good—sometimes—as you'll find anywhere.—

But, women gits to braggin' on their *bread,*
I'm s'picious 'bout their *pie*—as Danty said."
This raillery Floretty strangely seemed
To take as compliment, and fairly beamed
With pleasure at it all.
—"Speakin' o' *bread*—
When she come here to live," The Hired Man
said,—
"Never be'n out o' *Freeport* 'fore she come
Up here,—of course she needed *'sperience* some.—
So, one day, when yer Ma was goin' to set
The risin' fer some bread, she sent Florett'
To borry *leaven,* 'crost at Ryans'.—So,
She went and asked fer *twelve.*—She didn't *know,*
But thought, *whatever* 'twuz, that she could keep
One fer *herse'f* she said. O she wuz deep!"

Some little evidence of favor hailed
The Hired Man's humor; but it wholly failed
To touch the serious Susan Loehr, whose air
And thought rebuked them all to listening there
To her brief history of the *city* man
And his pale wife—"A sweeter woman than
She ever saw!"—So Susan testified,—
And so attested all the Loehrs beside.—
So entertaining was the history, that
The Hired Man, in the corner where he sat
In quiet sequestration, shelling corn,
Ceased wholly, listening, with a face forlorn
As Sorrow's own, while Susan, John and Jake
Told of these strangers who had come to make

Some weeks' stay in the town, in hopes to gain
Once more the health the wife had sought in vain:
Their doctor, in the city, used to know
The Loehrs—Dan and Rachel—years ago,—
And so had sent a letter and request
For them to take a kindly interest
In favoring the couple all they could—
To find some home-place for them, if they would,
Among their friends in town. He ended by
A dozen further lines, explaining why
His patient must have change of scene and air—
New faces, and the simple friendships there
With *them,* which might, in time, make her forget
A grief that kept her ever brooding yet
And wholly melancholy and depressed,—
Nor yet could she find sleep by night nor rest
By day, for thinking—thinking—thinking still
Upon a grief beyond the doctor's skill,—
The death of her one little girl.
"Pore thing!"
Floretty sighed, and with the turkey-wing
Brushed off the stove-hearth softly, and peered in
The kettle of molasses, with her thin
Voice wandering into song unconsciously—
In purest, if most witless, sympathy.—

"'Then sleep no more:
Around thy heart
Some ten-der dream may i-dlee play,
But mid-night song,
With mad-jick art,
Will chase that dree muh-way!'"

"That-air besetment of Floretty's," said
The Hired Man,—*"singin'*—she *inhairited,*—
Her *father* wuz addicted—same as her—
To singin'—yes, and played the dulcimer!
But—gittin' back,—I s'pose yer talkin' 'bout
Them *Hammondses.* Well, Hammond he gits out
Pattents on things—inventions-like, I'm told—
And's got more money'n a house could hold!
And yit he can't git up no pattent-right
To do away with *dyin'.*—And he might
Be worth a *million,* but he couldn't find
Nobody sellin' *health* of any kind! . . .
But they's no thing onhandier fer *me*
To use than other people's misery.—
Floretty, hand me that-air skillet there
And lemme git 'er het up, so's them-air
Childern kin have their pop-corn."

It was good
To hear him now, and so the children stood
Closer about him, waiting.

"Things to *eat,*"
The Hired Man went on, " 'smighty hard to beat!
Now, when *I* wuz a boy, we wuz so pore,
My parunts couldn't 'ford pop-corn no more
To pamper *me* with;—so, I hat to go
Without pop-corn—sometimes a *year* er so!—
And *suffer'n' saints!* how hungry I would git
Fer jest one other chance—like this—at it!
Many and many a time I've *dreamp',* at night,
About pop-corn,—all bu'sted open white,
And hot, you know—and jest enough o' salt

"The hired man and Floretty"

And butter on it fer to find no fault—
Oomh!—Well! as I was goin' on to say,—
After a-*dreamin'* of it thataway,
Then havin' to wake up and find it's all
A *dream,* and hain't got no pop-corn at-tall,
Ner hain't *had* none—I'd think, *'Well, where's the use!'*
And jest lay back and sob the plaster'n' loose!
And I have *prayed,* what*ever* happened, it
'Ud eether be pop-corn er death! . . . And yit
I've noticed—more'n likely so have you—
That things don't happen when you *want* 'em to."

And thus he ran on artlessly, with speech
And work in equal exercise, till each
Tureen and bowl brimmed white. And then he greased
The saucers ready for the wax, and seized
The fragrant-steaming kettle, at a sign
Made by Floretty; and, each child in line,
He led out to the pump—where, in the dim
New coolness of the night, quite near to him
He felt Floretty's presence, fresh and sweet
As . . . dewy night-air after kitchen-heat.

There, still, with loud delight of laugh and jest,
They plied their subtle alchemy with zest—
Till, sudden, high above their tumult, welled
Out of the sitting-room a song which held
Them stilled in some strange rapture, listening
To the sweet blur of voices chorusing:—

. . . . . .

"'When twilight approaches the season
That ever is sacred to song,
Does some one repeat my name over,
And sigh that I tarry so long?
And is there a chord in the music
That's missed when my voice is away?—
And a chord in each heart that awakens
Regret at my wearisome stay-ay—
Regret at my wearisome stay.'"

All to himself, The Hired Man thought—"Of course
They'll sing *Floretty* homesick!"
. . . O strange source
Of ecstasy! O mystery of Song!—
To hear the dear old utterance flow along:—

"'Do they set me a chair near the table
When evening's home-pleasures are nigh?—
When the candles are lit in the parlor,
And the stars in the calm azure sky.'" . . .

Just then the moonlight sliced the porch slantwise,
And flashed in misty spangles in the eyes
Floretty clenched, while through the dark—
"I jing!"
A voice asked, "Where's that song *'you'd* learn to sing
Ef I sent you the *ballat?'*—which I done
Last I was home at Freeport.—S'pose you run
And git it—and we'll all go in to where
They'll know the notes and sing it fer ye there."
And up the darkness of the old stairway

Floretty fled, without a word to say—
Save to herself some whisper muffled by
Her apron, as she wiped her lashes dry.

Returning, with a letter, which she laid
Upon the kitchen-table while she made
A hasty crock of "float,"—poured thence into
A deep glass dish of iridescent hue
And glint and sparkle, with an overflow
Of froth to crown it, foaming white as snow.—
And then—pound-cake, and jelly-cake as rare,
For its delicious complement,—with air
Of Hebe mortalized, she led her van
Of votaries, rounded by The Hired Man.

THE EVENING COMPANY

WITHIN the sitting-room, the company
Had been increased in number. Two or three
Young couples had been added: Emma King,
Ella and Mary Mathers—all could sing
Like veritable angels—Lydia Martin, too,
And Nelly Millikan.—What songs they knew!—

> *"'Ever of thee—wherever I may be,*
> *Fondly I'm drea-m-ing ever of thee!'"*

And with their gracious voices blend the grace
Of Warsaw Barnett's tenor; and the bass
Unfathomed of Wick Chapman—Fancy still
Can *feel,* as well as *hear* it, thrill on thrill,
Vibrating plainly down the backs of chairs
And through the wall and up the old hall-stairs.—
Indeed, young Chapman's voice especially
Attracted *Mr. Hammond.*—For, said he,
Waiving the most Elysian sweetness of
The *ladies'* voices—altitudes above
The *man's* for sweetness;—*but*—as *contrast,* would
Not Mr. Chapman be so very good

As, just now, to oblige *all* with—in fact,
Some sort of *jolly* song,—to counteract
In part, at least, the sad, pathetic trend
Of music *generally*. Which wish our friend
"The Noted Traveler" made second to
With heartiness—and so each, in review,
Joined in—until the radiant *basso* cleared
His wholly unobstructed throat and peered
Intently at the ceiling—voice and eye
As opposite indeed as earth and sky.—
Thus he uplifted his vast bass and let
It roam at large the memories booming yet:

> "'Old Simon the Cellarer keeps a rare store
> Of Malmsey and Malvoi-sie,
> Of Cyprus, and who can say how many more?—
> But a chary old soul is he-e-ee—
> A chary old so-u-l is he!
> Of hock and Canary he never doth fail;
> And all the year round, there is brewing of ale;—
> Yet he never aileth, he quaintly doth say,
> While he keeps to his sober six flagons a day.'"

. . . And then the chorus—the men's voices all
Warred in it—like a German Carnival.—
Even *Mrs.* Hammond smiled, as in her youth,
Hearing her husband.—And in veriest truth
"The Noted Traveler's" ever-present hat
Seemed just relaxed a little, after that,
As at conclusion of the Bacchic song
He stirred his "float" vehemently and long.

Then Cousin Rufus with his flute, and art
Blown blithely through it from both soul and
heart—
Inspired to heights of mastery by the glad,
Enthusiastic audience he had
In the young ladies of a town that knew
No other flutist,—nay, nor *wanted* to,
Since they had heard *his* "Polly Hopkins Waltz,"
Or "Rickett's Hornpipe," with its faultless faults,
As rendered solely, he explained, "by ear,"
Having but heard it once, Commencement Year,
At "Old Ann Arbor."
Little Maymie now
Seemed "friends" with *Mr. Hammond*—anyhow,
Was lifted to his lap—where settled, she,
Enthroned thus, in her dainty majesty,
Gained *universal* audience—although
Addressing him alone:—"I'm come to show
You my new Red-blue pencil; and *she* says"—
(Pointing to *Mrs.* Hammond)—"that she guess'
You'll make a *picture* fer me."
"And what *kind*
Of picture?" Mr. Hammond asked, inclined
To serve the child as bidden, folding square
The piece of paper she had brought him there,—
"I don't know," Maymie said—"only ist make
A *little dirl,* like me!"
He paused to take
A sharp view of the child, and then he drew—
A while with red, and then a while with blue—

The outline of a little girl that stood
In converse with a wolf in a great wood;
And she had on a hood and cloak of red—
As Maymie watched—*"Red Riding-Hood!"* she said.
"And who's *'Red Riding-Hood'?"*
"W'y, don't *you* know?"
Asked little Maymie—
But the man looked so
All uninformed, that little Maymie could
But tell him *all about* Red Riding-Hood.

MAYMIE'S STORY OF RED RIDING-HOOD

W'Y, one time wuz a little-weenty dirl,
An' she wuz named Red Riding-Hood, 'cause her—
Her *Ma* she maked a little red cloak fer her
'At turnt up over her head.—An' it 'uz all
Ist one piece o' red cardinul 'at's like
The drate-long stockin's the storekeepers has.—
Oh! it 'uz purtiest cloak in all the world
An' *all* this town er anywheres they is!
An' so, one day, her Ma she put it on
Red Riding-Hood, she did—one day, she did—
An' it 'uz *Sund'y*—'cause the little cloak
It 'uz too nice to wear ist *ever'* day
An' *all* the time!—An' so her Ma, she put
It on Red Riding-Hood—an' telled her not
To dit no dirt on it ner dit it mussed
Ner nothin'! An'—an'—nen her Ma she dot
Her little basket out, 'at Old Kriss bringed
Her wunst—one time, he did. An' nen she fill'
It full o' whole lots an' 'bundance o' dood things t' eat
(Allus my Dran'ma *she* says ' 'bundance,' too.)
An' so her Ma fill' little Red Riding-Hood's
Nice basket all ist full o' dood things t' eat,

An' tell her take 'em to her old Dran'ma—
An' not to *spill* 'em, neever—'cause ef she
'Ud stump her toe an' spill 'em, her Dran'ma
She'll haf to *punish* her!
An' nen—An' so
Little Red Riding-Hood she p'omised she
'Ud be all careful nen, an' cross' her heart
'At she won't run an' spill 'em all fer six—
Five—ten—two-hundred-bushel-dollars-gold!
An' nen she kiss' her Ma doo'-by an' went
A-skippin' off—away fur off frough the
Big woods, where her Dran'ma she live at—
No!—
She didn't do *a-skippin'*, like I said:—
She ist went *walkin'*—careful-like an' slow—
Ist like a little lady—walkin' 'long
As all polite an' nice—an' slow—an' straight—
An' turn her toes—ist like she's marchin' in
The Sund'y-School k-session!

An'—an'—so
She 'uz a-doin' along—an' doin' along—
On frough the drate-big woods—'cause her
Dran'ma
She live 'way, 'way fur off frough the big woods
From *her* Ma's house. So when Red Riding-Hood
Dit to do there, she allus have most fun—
When she do frough the drate-big woods, you
know.—
'Cause she ain't feard a bit o' anything!

An' so she sees the little hoppty-birds
'At's in the trees, an' flyin' all around,
An' singin' dlad as ef their parunts said
They'll take 'em to the magic-lantern show!
An' she 'ud pull the purty flowers an' things
A-growin' round the stumps.—An' she 'ud ketch
The purty butterflies, an' drasshoppers,
An' stick pins frough 'em—No!—I ist *said* that!—
'Cause she's too dood an' kind an' 'bedient
To *hurt* things thataway.—She'd *ketch* 'em, though,
An' ist *play* wiv 'em ist a little while,
An' nen she'd let 'em fly away, she would,
An' ist skip on ad'in to her Dran'ma's.

An' so, while she 'uz doin' 'long an' 'long,
First thing you know they 'uz a drate-big old
Mean wicked Wolf jumped out 'at wanted t' eat
Her up, but *dassent* to—'cause wite clos't there
They wuz a Man a-choppin' wood, an' you
Could *hear* him.—So the old Wolf he 'uz *feard*
Only to ist be *kind* to her.—So he
Ist 'tended-like he wuz dood friends to her
An' says, "Dood morning, little Red Riding-
Hood!"—
All ist as kind!
An' nen Riding-Hood
She say "Dood morning," too—all kind an' nice—
Ist like her Ma she learn'—No!—mustn't say
"Learn'," 'cause *"learn'"* it's unproper.—So she say
It like her *Ma* she *"teached"* her.—An'—so she

Ist says "Dood morning" to the Wolf—'cause she
Don't know ut-tall 'at he's a *wicked* Wolf
An' want to eat her up!
Nen old Wolf smile
An' say, so kind: "Where air you doin' at?"
Nen little Red Riding-Hood she say: "I'm doin'
To my Dran'ma's, 'cause my Ma say I might."
Nen, when she tell him that, the old Wolf he
Ist turn an' light out frough the big thick woods,
Where she can't see him any more. An' so
She think he's went to *his* house—but he hain't,—
He's went to her Dran'ma's, to be there first—
An' *ketch* her, ef she don't watch mighty sharp
What she's about!
An' nen when the old Wolf
Dit to her Dran'ma's house, he's purty smart,—
An' so he 'tend-like *he's* Red Riding-Hood,
An' knock at th' door. An' Riding-Hood's Dran'ma
She's sick in bed an' can't come to the door
An' open it. So th' old Wolf knock' *two* times.
An' nen Red Riding-Hood's Dran'ma she says,
"Who's there?" she says. An' old Wolf 'tends-like
he's
Little Red Riding-Hood, you know, an' make'
His voice soun' ist like hers, an' says: "It's me,
Dran'ma—an' I'm Red Riding-Hood an' I'm
Ist come to *see* you."
Nen her old Dran'ma
She think it *is* little Red Riding-Hood,
An' so she say: "Well, come in nen an' make
You'se'f at home," she says, "'cause I'm down sick

In bed, an' got the 'ralgia, so's I can't
Dit up an' let ye in."
An' so th' old Wolf
Ist march' in nen an' shet the door ad'in,
An' *drowl',* he did, an' *splunge'* up on the bed
An' et up old Miz Riding-Hood 'fore she
Could put her specs on an' see who it wuz.—
An' so she never knowed *who* et her up!

An' nen the wicked Wolf he ist put on
Her nightcap, an' all covered up in bed—
Like he wuz *her,* you know.
Nen, purty soon
Here come along little Red Riding-Hood,
An' *she* knock' at the door. An' old Wolf 'tend-
Like *he's* her Dran'ma; an' he say, "Who's there?"
Ist like her Dran'ma say, you know. An' so
Little Red Riding-Hood she say: "It's *me,*
Dran'ma—an' I'm Red Riding-Hood an' I'm
Ist come to *see* you."
An' nen old Wolf nen
He cough an' say: "Well, come in nen an' make
You'se'f at home," he says, "'cause I'm down sick
In bed, an' got the 'ralgia, so's I can't
Dit up an' let ye in."
An' so she think
It's her Dran'ma a-talkin'.—So she ist
Open' the door an' come in, an' set down
Her basket, an' taked off her things, an' bringed
A chair an' clumbed up on the bed, wite by
The old big Wolf she thinks is her Dran'ma—

Only she thinks the old Wolf's dot whole lots
More bigger ears, an' lots more whiskers, too,
Than her Dran'ma; an' so Red Riding-Hood
She's kind o' skeered a little. So she says,
"Oh, Dran'ma, what *big eyes* you dot!" An' nen
The old Wolf says: "They're ist big thataway
'Cause I'm so dlad to see you!"
Nen she says,
"Oh, Dran'ma, what a drate-big nose you dot!"
Nen th' old Wolf says: "It's ist big thataway
Ist 'cause I smell the dood things 'at you bringed
Me in the basket!"
An' nen Riding-Hood
She says, "Oh-me-oh-*my!* Dran'ma! what big
White long sharp teeth you dot!"
Nen old Wolf says:
"Yes—an' they're thataway"—an' drowled—
"They're thataway," he says, "to *eat* you wiv!"
An' nen he ist *jump'* at her.—
But she *scream'*—
An' *scream'*, she did.—So's 'at the Man
'At wuz a-choppin' wood, you know,—*he* hear,
An' come a-runnin' in there wiv his ax;
An', 'fore the old Wolf know' what he's about,
He split his old brains out an' killed him s' quick
It make' his head swim!—An' Red Riding-Hood
She wuzn't hurt at all!
An' the big Man
He tooked her all safe home, he did, an' tell
Her Ma she's all right an' ain't hurt at all
An' old Wolf's dead an' killed—an' ever'thing!—

So her Ma wuz so tickled an' so proud,
She gived *him* all the good things t' eat they wuz
'At's in the basket, an' she tell' him 'at
She's much oblige', an' say to "call ad'in."
An' story's honest *truth*—an' all *so,* too!

LIMITATIONS OF GENIUS

THE audience entire seemed pleased—indeed,
Extremely pleased. And little Maymie, freed
From her task of instructing, ran to show
Her wondrous colored picture to and fro
Among the company.
"And how comes it," said
Some one to Mr. Hammond, "that, instead
Of the inventor's life, you did not choose
The *artist's?*—since the world can better lose
A cutting-box or reaper than it can
A noble picture painted by a man
Endowed with gifts this drawing would suggest"—
Holding the picture up to show the rest.
"There now!" chimed in the wife, her pale face lit
Like winter snow with sunrise over it,—
"That's what *I'm* always asking him.—But *he—*
Well, as he's answering *you,* he answers *me,—*
With that same silent, suffocating smile
He's wearing now!"
For quite a little while
No further speech from any one, although
All looked at Mr. Hammond and that slow,
Immutable, mild smile of his. And then
The encouraged querist asked him yet again

Why was it, and et cetera—with all
The rest, expectant, waiting round the wall,—
Until the gentle Mr. Hammond said
He'd answer with a *"parable,"* instead—
About "a dreamer" that he used to know—
"An artist"—"master"—*all*—in *embryo.*

MR. HAMMOND'S PARABLE

THE DREAMER

I

HE was a Dreamer of the Days:
Indolent as a lazy breeze
Of midsummer, in idlest ways
Lolling about in the shade of trees.
The farmer turned—as he passed him by
Under the hillside where he kneeled
Plucking a flower—with scornful eye
And rode ahead in the harvest-field
Muttering—"Lawz! ef that-air shirk
Of a boy wuz mine fer a week er so,
He'd quit *dreamin'* and git to work
And *airn* his livin'—er—Well! *I* know!"
And even kindlier rumor said,
Tapping with finger a shaking head,—
"Got such a curious kind o' way—
Wouldn't surprise me much, I say!"

Lying limp, with upturned gaze
Idly dreaming away his days.
No companions? Yes, a book
Sometimes under his arm he took

To read aloud to a lonesome brook.
And schoolboys, truant, once had heard
A strange voice chanting, faint and dim—
Followed the echoes, and found it him,
Perched in a tree-top like a bird,
Singing, clean from the highest limb;
And, fearful and awed, they all slipped by
To wonder in whispers if he could fly.

"Let him alone!" his father said
When the old schoolmaster came to say,
"He took no part in his books to-day—
Only the lesson the readers read.—
His mind seems sadly going astray!"
"Let him alone!" came the mournful tone,
And the father's grief in his sad eyes shone—
Hiding his face in his trembling hand,
Moaning, "Would I could understand!
But as Heaven wills it I accept
Uncomplainingly!" So he wept.

Then went "The Dreamer" as he willed,
As uncontrolled as a light sail filled
Flutters about with an empty boat
Loosed from its moorings and afloat:
Drifted out from the busy quay
Of dull school-moorings listlessly;
Drifted off on the talking breeze,
All alone with his reveries;
Drifted on, as his fancies wrought—
Out on the mighty gulfs of thought.

II

The farmer came in the evening gray
  And took the bars of the pasture down;
Called to the cows in a coaxing way,
  "Bess" and "Lady" and "Spot" and "Brown,"
While each gazed with a wide-eyed stare,
As though surprised at his coming there—
Till another tone, in a higher key,
Brought their obeyance loathfully.

  Then, as he slowly turned and swung
The topmost bar to its proper rest,
  Something fluttered along and clung
An instant, shivering at his breast—
  A wind-scared fragment of legal cap
Which darted again, as he struck his hand
  On his sounding chest with a sudden slap,
And hurried sailing across the land.
But as it clung he had caught the glance
Of a little penciled countenance,
And a glamour of written words; and hence,
A minute later, over the fence,
"Here and there and gone astray
Over the hills and far away,"
He chased it into a thicket of trees
And took it away from the captious breeze.

A scrap of paper with a rhyme
Scrawled upon it of summer-time:
A pencil-sketch of a dairymaid,
Under a farmhouse porch's shade,

Working merrily; and was blent
With her glad features such sweet content,
That a song she sang in the lines below
Seemed delightfully apropos:—

SONG

"Why do I sing—Tra-la-la-la-la!
Glad as a King?—Tra-la-la-la-la!
  Well, since you ask,—
  I have such a pleasant task,
I can not help but sing!

"Why do I smile—Tra-la-la-la-la!
Working the while?—Tra-la-la-la-la!
  Work like this is play,—
  So I'm playing all the day—
I can not help but smile!

"So, if you please—Tra-la-la-la-la!
Live at your ease!—Tra-la-la-la-la!
  You've only got to turn,
  And, you see, it's bound to churn—
It can not help but please!"

The farmer pondered and scratched his head,
  Reading over each mystic word.—
"Some o' The Dreamer's work!" he said—
  "Ah, here's more—and name and date
In his handwrite'!"—And the good man read,—
  "'Patent applied for, July third,
  Eighteen hundred and forty-eight'!"
The fragment fell from his nerveless grasp—
His awed lips thrilled with the joyous gasp:
  "I see the p'int to the whole concern,—
  He's studied out a patent churn!"

FLORETTY'S MUSICAL CONTRIBUTION

ALL seemed delighted, though the elders more,
Of course, than were the children.—Thus, before
Much interchange of mirthful compliment,
The story-teller said *his* stories "went"
(Like a bad candle) *best* when they went *out*,—
And that some sprightly music, dashed about,
Would *wholly* quench his "glimmer," and inspire
Far brighter lights.
And, answering this desire,
The flutist opened, in a rapturous strain
Of rippling notes—a perfect April-rain
Of melody that drenched the senses through;—
Then—gentler—gentler—as the dusk sheds dew,
It fell, by velvety, staccatoed halts,
Swooning away in old "Von Weber's Waltz."
Then the young ladies sang "Isle of the Sea"—
In ebb and flow and wave so billowy,—
Only with quavering breath and folded eyes
The listeners heard, buoyed on the fall and rise
Of its insistent and exceeding stress

Of sweetness and ecstatic tenderness. . . .
With lifted finger *yet,* Remembrance—List!—
"Beautiful isle of the sea!" wells in a mist
Of tremulous. . . .
. . . After much whispering
Among the children, Alex came to bring
Some kind of *letter*—as it seemed to be—
To Cousin Rufus. This he carelessly
Unfolded—reading to himself alone,—
But, since its contents became, later, known,
And no one *"played* so *awful* bad," the same
May here be given—of course without full name,
Facsimile, or written kink or curl
Or clue. It read:—

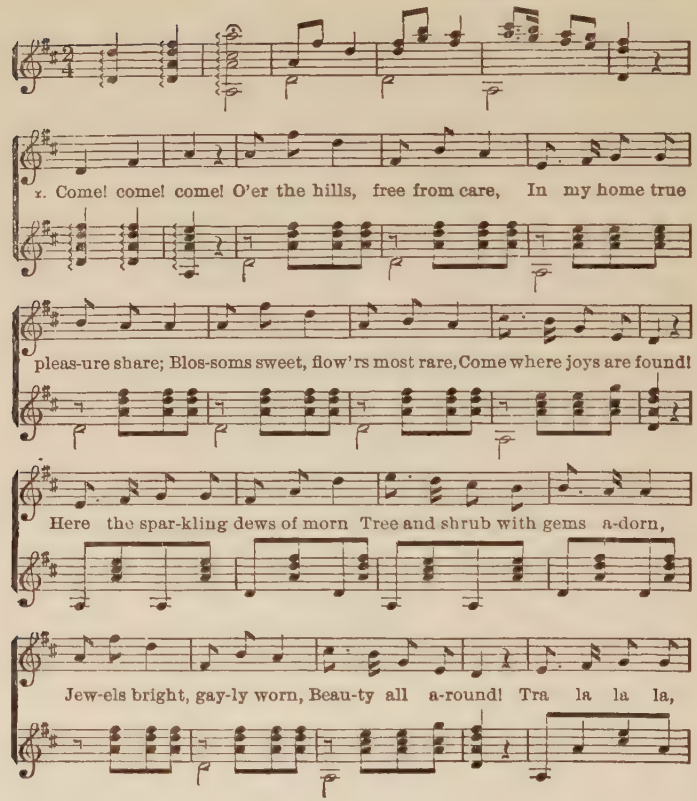
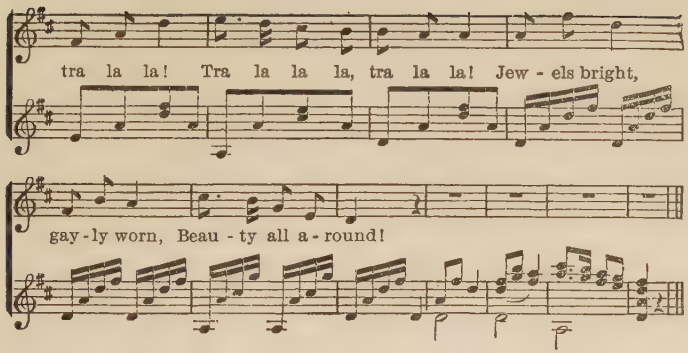
"Wild Roved an indian Girl
Brite al Floretty"
deer freind
i now take
~~this~~ These means to send that *Song* to you & make
my Promus good to you in the Regards
Of doing What i Promust afterwards.
the *notes* & *Words* is both here *Printed* sos
you ~~kin~~ can git *uncle Mart* to read you ~~them~~ those
& cousin Rufus you can git to *Play*
the *notes* fur you on eny Plezunt day
His Legul Work aint ~~Prescin~~ Pressing.
Ever thine
As shore as the Vine
doth the Stump intwine
thou art my Lump of Sackkerrine
Rinaldo Rinaldine
the Pirut in Captivity.

. . . There dropped
Another square scrap.—But the hand was stopped
That reached for it—Floretty suddenly
Had set a firm foot on her property—
Thinking it was the *letter,* not the *song,*—
But blushing to discover she was wrong,
When, with all gravity of face and air,
Her precious letter *handed* to her there
By Cousin Rufus left her even more
In apprehension than she was before.
But, testing his unwavering, kindly eye,
She seemed to put her last suspicion by,
And, in exchange, handed the song to him.—

A page torn from a song-book: Small and dim
Both notes and words were—but as plain as day
They seemed to him, as he began to play—
And plain to *all* the singers,—as he ran
An airy, warbling prelude, then began
Singing and swinging in so blithe a strain,
That every voice rang in the old refrain:

MOUNTAIN MAID'S INVITATION

ARRANGED BY J. E. GOULD.


1. Come! come! come! O'er the hills, free from care, In my home true
pleas-ure share; Blos-soms sweet, flow'rs most rare, Come where joys are found!
Here the spar-kling dews of morn Tree and shrub with gems a-dorn,
Jew-els bright, gay-ly worn, Beau-ty all a-round! Tra la la la,

II

Come! come! come!
Not a sigh, not a tear,
E'er is found in sadness here;
Music soft, breathing near,
Charms away each care!
Birds, in joyous hours among
Hill and dell, with grateful song,
Dearest strains here prolong,
Vocal all the air!
Tra la la la, tra la la!
Tra la la la, tra la la!
Dearest strains here prolong,
Vocal all the air!

III

Come! come! come!
When the day's gently gone,
Evening shadows coming on,
Then, by love, kindly won,
Truest bliss be thine!
Ne'er was found a bliss so pure,
Never joys so long endure;
Who would not love secure?
Who would joys decline?
Tra la la la, tra la la!
Tra la la la, tra la la!
Who would not love secure?
Who would joys decline?

From the beginning of the song, clean through,
Floretty's features were a study to
The flutist who "read *notes*" so readily,
Yet read so little of the mystery
Of that face of the girl's.—Indeed, *one* thing
Bewildered him quite into worrying,
And that was, noticing, throughout it all,
The Hired Man shrinking closer to the wall,
She ever backing toward him through the throng
Of barricading children—till the song
Was ended, and at last he saw her near
Enough to reach and take him by the ear
And pinch it just a pang's worth of her ire
And leave it burning like a coal of fire.
He noticed, too, in subtle pantomime
She seemed to dust him off, from time to time;
And when somebody, later, asked if she
Had never heard the song before—"What! *me?*"
She said—then blushed again and smiled,—
"I've knowed that song sence *Adam* wuz a child!—
It's jes' a joke o' this-here man's.—He's learned
To *read* and *write* a little, and it's turned
His fool-head some—That's all!"
And then some one
Of the loud-wrangling boys said—"*'Course* they's none
No more, *these* days!—They's Fairies *ust* to be,
But they're all dead, a hundred years!" said he.

"Well, there's where you're *mustakened!*"—in reply
They heard Bud's voice, pitched sharp and thin and
high.—

"An' how you goin' to *prove* it?"

"Well, I *kin!*"
Said Bud, with emphasis,—"They's one lives in
Our garden—and I *see* 'im wunst, wiv my
Own eyes—*one* time I did."

"Oh, what a lie!"
—*"'Sh!"*

"Well, nen," said the skeptic—seeing there
The older folks attracted—"tell us *where*
You saw him, an' all *'bout* him!"

"Yes, my son.—
If you tell 'stories,' you may tell us one,"
The smiling father said, while Uncle Mart,
Behind him, winked at Bud, and pulled apart
His nose and chin with comical grimace—
Then sighed aloud, with sanctimonious face,—
"'How good and comely it is to see
Children and parents in friendship agree!'—
You fire away, Bud, on your Fairy tale—
Your *Uncle's* here to back you!"
Somewhat pale,
And breathless as to speech, the little man
Gathered himself. And thus his story ran.

BUD'S FAIRY TALE

SOME peoples thinks they ain't no Fairies *now*
No more yet!—But they *is,* I bet! 'Cause ef
They *wuzn't* Fairies, nen I' like to know
Who'd w'ite 'bout Fairies in the books, an' tell
What Fairies *does,* an' how their *picture* looks,
An' all an' ever'thing! W'y, ef they don't
Be Fairies any more, nen little boys
'Ud ist *sleep* when they go to sleep an' won't
Have ist no dweams at all,—'cause Fairies—*good*
Fairies—they're a-purpose to make dweams!
But they *is* Fairies—an' I *know* they is!
'Cause one time wunst, when it's all Summer-time,
An' don't haf to be no fires in the stove
Er fireplace to keep warm wiv—ner don't haf
To wear old scwatchy flannen shirts at all,
An' ain't no fweeze—ner cold—ner snow!—An'—
an'
Old skweeky twees got all the gween leaves on
An' ist keeps noddin', noddin' all the time,
Like they 'uz lazy an' a-twyin' to go
To sleep an' couldn't, 'cause the wind won't quit
A-blowin' in 'em, an' the birds won't stop
A-singin', so's they *kin.*—But twees *don't* sleep,

I guess! But *little boys* sleeps—an' *dweams,* too.—
An' that's a sign they's Fairies.
So, one time,
When I be'n playin' "Store" wunst over in
The shed of their old stable, an' Ed Howard
He maked me quit a-bein' pardners, 'cause
I dwinked the 'tend-like sody-water up
An' et the shore-'nuff crackers,—w'y, nen I
Clumbed over in our garden where the gwapes
Wuz purt' nigh ripe: An' I wuz ist a-layin'
There on th' old cwooked seat 'at Pa maked in
Our arber,—an' so I 'uz layin' there
A-whittlin' beets wiv my new dog-knife, an'
A-lookin' wite up thue the twimbly leaves—
An' wuzn't 'sleep at all!—An'-sir!—first thing
You know, a little *Fairy* hopped out there!—
A *leetle-teenty Fairy!—hope-may-die!*
An' he look' down at me, he did—an' he
Ain't bigger'n a *yellerbird!*—an' he
Say "Howdy-do!" he did—an' I could *hear*
Him—ist as *plain!*
Nen *I* say "Howdy-do!"
An' he say *"I'm* all hunky, Nibsey; how
Is *your* folks comin' on?"
An' nen I say
"My name ain't *'Nibsey,'* neever—my name's
Bud.—
An' what's *your* name?" I says to him.
An' he
Ist laugh an' say, " *'Bud's* awful *funny* name!"

An' he ist laid back on a big bunch o' gwapes
An' laugh' an' laugh', he did—like somebody
'Uz tick-el-un his feet!
An' nen I say—
"What's *your* name," nen I say, "afore you bu'st
Yo'se'f a-laughin' bout *my* name?" I says.
An' nen he dwy up laughin'—kind o' mad—
An' say, "W'y, *my* name's *Squidjicum,*" he says.
An' nen *I* laugh an' say—*"Gee!* what a name!"
An' when I make fun of his name, like that,
He ist git awful mad an' spunky, an'
'Fore you know, he gwabbed holt of a vine—
A big long vine 'at's danglin' up there, an'
He ist helt on wite tight to that, an' down
He swung quick past my face, he did, an' ist
Kicked at me hard's he could!
But I'm too quick
Fer *Mr. Squidjicum!* I ist weached out
An' ketched him, in my hand—an' helt him, too,
An' *squeezed* him, ist like little wobins when
They can't fly yet an' git flopped out their nest.
An' nen I turn him all wound over, an'
Look at him clos't, you know—wite clos't,—cause ef
He *is* a Fairy, w'y, I want to see
The *wings* he's got.—But he's dwessed up so fine
'At I can't *see* no wings.—An' all the time
He's twyin' to kick me yet: An' so I take
F'esh holts an' *squeeze* ag'in—an' harder, too;
An' I says, *"Hold up, Mr. Squidjicum!*—
You're kickin' the w'ong man!" I says; an' nen

I ist *squeeze'* him, purt' nigh my *best,* I did—
An' I heerd somepin' bu'st!—An' nen he cwied
An' says, "You better look out what you're doin'!—
You' bu'st my spider-web suspenners, an'
You' got my wose-leaf coat all cwinkled up
So's I can't go to old Miss Hoodjicum's
Tea-party, 's afternoon!"
An' nen I says—
"Who's 'old Miss Hoodjicum'?" I says.
An' he
Says, "Ef you lemme loose I'll tell you."
So
I helt the little skeezics 'way fur out
In one hand—so's he can't jump down t' th' ground
Wivout a-gittin' all stove up: an' nen
I says, "You're loose now.—Go ahead an' tell
'Bout the 'tea-party' where you're goin' at
So awful fast!" I says.
An' nen he say,—
"No use to *tell* you 'bout it, 'cause you won't
Believe it, 'less you go there your own se'f
An' see it wiv your own two eyes!" he says.
An' *he* says: "Ef you lemme *shore-'nuff* loose,
An' p'omise 'at you'll keep wite still, an' won't
Tetch nothin' 'at you see—an' never tell
Nobody in the world—an' lemme loose—
W'y, nen I'll *take* you there!"
But I says, "Yes
An' ef I let you loose, you'll *run!*" I says.
An' he says, "No, I won't!—I hope-may-die!"

Nen I says, "Cwoss your heart you won't!"
An' he
Ist cwoss his heart; an' nen I reach an' set
The little feller up on a long vine—
An' he 'uz so tickled to git lose ag'in,
He gwab the vine wiv boff his little hands
An' ist take an' turn in, he did, an' skin
'Bout forty-'leben cats!
Nen when he git
Thue whirlin' wound the vine, an' set on top
Of it ag'in, w'y, nen his "wose-leaf coat"
He bwag so much about, it's ist all tored
Up, an' ist hangin' strips an' rags—so he
Look like his Pa's a dwunkard. An' so nen
When he see what he's done—a-actin' up
So smart,—he's awful mad, I guess; an' ist
Pout out his lips an' twis' his little face
Ist ugly as he kin, an' set an' tear
His whole coat off—an' sleeves an' all.—An' nen
He wad it all togevver an' ist *th'ow*
It at me ist as hard as he kin dwive!

An' when I weach to ketch him, an' 'uz goin'
To give him 'nuvver squeezin', *he ist flewed*
Clean up on top the arbor!—'Cause, you know,
They *wuz* wings on him—when he tored his *coat*
Clean off—they *wuz* wings *under there.* But they
Wuz purty wobbly-like an' wouldn't work
Hardly at all—'cause purty soon, when I
Th'owed clods at him, an' sticks, an' got him shooed

Down off o' there, he come a-floppin' down
An' lit k-bang! on our old chicken-coop,
An' ist laid there a-whimper'n' like a child!
An' I tiptoed up wite clos't, an' I says, "What's
The matter wiv ye, Squidjicum?"
An' he
Says: "Dog-gone! when my wings gits stwaight
ag'in,
Where you all *crumpled* 'em," he says, "I bet
I'll ist fly clean away an' won't take you
To old Miss Hoodjicum's at all!" he says.
An' nen I ist weach out wite quick, I did,
An' gwab the sassy little snipe ag'in—
Nen tooked my top-stwing an' tie down his wings
So's he *can't* fly, 'less'n I want him to!
An' nen I says: "Now, Mr. Squidjicum,
You better ist light out," I says, "to old
Miss Hoodjicum's, an' show *me* how to git
There, too," I says; "er ef you don't," I says,
"I'll climb up wiv you on our buggy-shed
An' push you off!" I says.
An' nen he say
All wite, he'll show me there; an' tell me nen
To set him down wite easy on his feet,
An' loosen up the stwing a little where
It cut him under th' arms. An' nen he says,
"Come on!" he says; an' went a-limpin' 'long
The garden-paph—an' limpin' 'long an' 'long
Tel—purty soon he come on 'long to where's
A grea'-big cabbage-leaf. An' he stoop down

An' say, "Come on inunder here wiv me!"
So *I* stoop down an' crawl inunder there,
Like he say.
An' inunder there's a grea'-
Big clod, they is—a' awful grea'-big clod!
An' nen he says, *"Woll this-here clod away!"*
An' so I woll' the clod away. An' nen
It's all wet, where the dew'z inunder where
The old clod wuz.—An' nen the Fairy he
Git on the wet-place: Nen he say to me,
"Git on the wet-place, too!" An' nen he say,
"Now hold yer breff an' shet yer eyes!" he says,
"Tel I say *Squinchy-winchy!*" Nen he say—
Somepin' *in Dutch,* I guess.—An' nen I felt
Like we 'uz sinkin' down—an' sinkin' down!—
Tel purty soon the little Fairy weach
An' pinch my nose an' yell at me an' say,
"Squinchy-winchy! Look wherever you please!"
Nen when I looked—Oh! they 'uz purtiest place
Down there you ever saw in all the World!—
They 'uz ist *flowers* an' *woses*—yes, an' *twees*
Wiv *blossoms* on an' *big wipe apples* boff!
An' butterflies, they wuz—an' hummin'-birds—
An' *yeller*birds an' *blue*birds—yes, an' *wed!*—
An' ever'wheres an' all awound 'uz vines
Wiv wipe p'serve-pears on 'em!—Yes, an' all
An' ever'thing 'at's ever growin' in
A garden—er canned up—all wipe at wunst!—
It wuz ist like a garden—only it
'Uz ist a *little bit* o' garden—'bout big wound

As ist our twun'el-bed is.—An' all wound
An' wound the little garden's a gold fence—
An' little gold gate, too—an' ash-hopper
'At's all gold, too—an' ist full o' gold ashes!
An' wite in th' middle o' the garden wuz
A little gold house, 'at's ist 'bout as big
As ist a bird-cage is: An' *in* the house
They 'uz whole-lots *more* Fairies there—'cause I
Picked up the little house, an' peeked in at
The winders, an' I see 'em all in there
Ist *buggin'* round! An' Mr. Squidjicum
He twy to make me quit, but I gwab *him*
An' poke him down the chimbly, too, I did!—
An' y'ort to see *him* hop out 'mongst 'em there!—
Ist like he 'uz the boss an' ist got back!—
"Hain't ye got on them-air dew-dumplin's yet?"
He says.
An' they says no.
An' nen he says—
"Better git at 'em nen!" he says, *"wite quick—*
'Cause old Miss Hoodjicum's a-comin'!"
Nen
They all set wound a little gold tub—an'
All 'menced a-peelin' dewdwops, ist like they
'Uz *peaches.*—An', it looked so funny, I
Ist laugh' out loud, an' *dwopped* the little house,—
An' 't bu'sted like a soap-bubble!—an' 't skeered
Me so, I—I—I—I,—it skeered me so,—
I—ist *waked* up.—No! I *ain't* be'n *asleep*
An' *dweam* it all, like *you* think,—but it's shore
Fer-certain *fact* an' cwoss my heart it is!

A DELICIOUS INTERRUPTION

ALL were quite gracious in their plaudits of
Bud's Fairy; but another stir above
That murmur was occasioned by a sweet
Young lady-caller, from a neighboring street,
Who rose reluctantly to say good night
To all the pleasant friends and the delight
Experienced,—as she had promised sure
To be back home by nine. Then paused, demure,
And wondered was it *very* dark.—Oh, *no!*—
She had *come* by herself and she could go
Without an *escort.* Ah, you sweet girls all!
What young gallant but comes at such a call,
Your most abject slaves! Why, there were three
Young men, and several men of family,
Contesting for the honor—which at last
Was given to Cousin Rufus; and he cast
A kingly look behind him, as the pair
Vanished with laughter in the darkness there.
As order was restored, with everything
Suggestive, in its way, of "romancing,"
Some one observed that *now* would be the chance
For *Noey* to relate a circumstance
That *he*—the very specious rumor went—

Had been eye-witness of, by accident.
Noey turned pippin-crimson; then turned pale
As death; then turned to flee, without avail.—
"*There!* head him off! *Now!* hold him in his
chair!—
Tell us the Serenade-tale, now, Noey.—*There!*"

NOEY'S NIGHT-PIECE

"THEY ain't much 'tale' about it!" Noey said.—
"K'tawby grapes wuz gittin' good-'n'-red
I rickollect; and Tubb Kingry and me
'Ud kind o' browse round town, daytime, to see
What neighbers 'peared to have the most to spare
'At wuz git-at-able and no dog there
When we come round to git 'em, say 'bout ten
O'clock at night, when mostly old folks then
Wuz snorin' at each other like they yit
Helt some old grudge 'at never slep' a bit.
Well, at the *Pars'nige*—ef ye'll call to mind,—
They's 'bout the biggest grape-arber you'll find
'Most anywheres.—And mostly there, we knowed
They wuz *k'tawbies* thick as ever growed—
And more'n they'd *p'serve*.—Besides I've heerd
Ma say k'tawby-grape p'serves jes' 'peared
A waste o' sugar, anyhow!—And so
My conscience stayed outside and lemme go
With Tubb, one night, the back-way, clean up through
That long black arber to the end next to
The house, where the k'tawbies, don't you know,
Wuz thickest. And 't'uz lucky we went *slow*,—

Fer jes' as we wuz cropin' to'rds the gray-
End, like, of the old arber—heerd Tubb say
In a skeered whisper, 'Hold up! They's some one
Jes' slippin' in here!—and *looks like a gun*
He's carryin'!' I *golly!* we both spread
Out flat ag'inst the ground!
'What's that?' Tubb said.—
And jes' then—*'plink! plunk! plink!'* we heerd
something
Under the back-porch winder.—Then, i jing!
Of course we rickollected 'bout the young
School-mam 'at wuz a-boardin' there, and sung,
And played on the melodium in the choir.—
And she 'uz 'bout as purty to admire
As any girl in town!—the fac's is, she
Jes' *wuz,* them times, to a dead certainty,
The belle o' this-here bailywick!—But—Well,—
I'd best git back to what I'm tryin' to tell:—
It wuz some feller come to serenade
Miss Wetherell: And there he plunked and played
His old guitar, and sung, and kep' his eye
Set on her winder, blacker'n the sky!—
And black it *stayed.*—But mayby she wuz 'way
From home, er wore out—bein' *Saturday!*

"It *seemed* a good 'eal *longer,* but I *know*
He sung and plunked there half a' hour er so
Afore, it 'peared-like, he could ever git
His own free qualified consents to quit
And go off 'bout his business. When he went
I bet you could 'a' bought him fer a cent!

"And now, behold ye all!—as Tubb and me
Wuz 'bout to raise up,—right in front we see
A feller slippin' out the arber, square
Smack under that-air little winder where
The *other* feller had been standin'.—And
The thing he wuz a-carryin' in his hand
Wuzn't no *gun* at all!—it wuz a *flute,*—
And *whoop-ee!* how it did git up and toot
And chirp and warble, tel a mockin'-bird
'Ud dast to never let hisse'f be heerd
Ferever, after such miracalous, high
Jimcracks and grand skyrootics played there by
Yer Cousin Rufus!—Yes-sir; it wuz him!—
And what's more,—all a-suddent that-air dim
Dark winder o' Miss Wetherell's wuz lit
Up like a' oyshture-sign, and under it
We see him sort o' wet his lips and smile
Down 'long his row o' dancin' fingers, while
He kind o' stiffened up and kinked his breath
And everlastin'ly jes' blowed the peth
Out o' that-air old one-keyed flute o' his.
And, bless their hearts, that's all the 'tale' they is!"

And even as Noey closed, all radiantly
The unconscious hero of the history,
Returning, met a perfect driving storm
Of welcome—a reception strangely warm
And *unaccountable,* to *him,* although
Most *gratifying,*—and he told them so.
"I only urge," he said, "my right to be
Enlightened." And a voice said: *"Certainly:*—

During your absence we agreed that you
Should tell us all a story, old or new,
Just in the immediate happy frame of mind
We knew you would return in."
So, resigned,
The ready flutist tossed his hat aside—
Glanced at the children, smiled, and thus complied.

COUSIN RUFUS' STORY

MY little story, Cousin Rufus said,
Is not so much a story as a fact.
It is about a certain wilful boy—
An aggrieved, unappreciated boy,
Grown to dislike his own home very much,
By reason of his parents being not
At all up to his rigid standard and
Requirements and exactions as a son
And disciplinarian.
So, sullenly
He brooded over his disheartening
Environments and limitations, till,
At last, well knowing that the outside world
Would yield him favors never found at home,
He rose determinedly one July dawn—
Even before the call for breakfast—and,
Climbing the alley-fence, and bitterly
Shaking his clenched fist at the wood-pile, he
Evanished down the turnpike.—Yes: he had,
Once and for all, put into execution
His long low-muttered threatenings—He had
Run off!—He had—had run away from home!

His parents, at discovery of his flight,
Bore up first-rate—especially his Pa,—
Quite possibly recalling his own youth,
And therefrom predicating, by high noon,
The absent one was very probably
Disporting his nude self in the delights
Of the old swimmin'-hole, some hundred yards
Below the slaughter-house, just east of town.
The stoic father, too, in his surmise
Was accurate—For, lo! the boy was there!

And there, too, he remained throughout the day—
Save at one starving interval in which
He clad his sunburnt shoulders long enough
To shy across a wheat-field, shadow-like,
And raid a neighboring orchard—bitterly,
And with spasmodic twitchings of the lip,
Bethinking him how all the other boys
Had *homes* to go to at the dinner-hour—
While *he*—alas!—*he had no home!*—At least
These very words seemed rising mockingly,
Until his every thought smacked raw and sour
And green and bitter as the apples he
In vain essayed to stay his hunger with.
Nor did he join the glad shouts when the boys
Returned rejuvenated for the long
Wet revel of the feverish afternoon.—
Yet, bravely, as his comrades splashed and swam
And spluttered, in their weltering merriment,
He tried to laugh, too,—but his voice was hoarse
And sounded to him like some other boy's.
And then he felt a sudden, poking sort

Of sickness at the heart, as though some cold
And scaly pain were blindly nosing it
Down in the dreggy darkness of his breast.
The tensioned pucker of his purple lips
Grew ever chillier and yet more tense—
The central hurt of it slow spreading till
It did possess the little face entire.
And then there grew to be a knuckled knot—
An aching kind of core within his throat—
An ache, all dry and swallowless, which seemed
To ache on just as bad when he'd pretend
He didn't notice it as when he did.
It was a kind of a conceited pain—
An overbearing, self-assertive and
Barbaric sort of pain that clean outhurt
A boy's capacity for suffering—
So, many times, the little martyr needs
Must turn himself all suddenly and dive
From sight of his hilarious playmates and
Surreptitiously weep under water.
Thus
He wrestled with his awful agony
Till almost dark; and then, at last—then, with
The very latest lingering group of his
Companions, he moved turgidly toward home—
Nay, rather *oozed* that way, so slow he went,—
With loathful, hesitating, loitering,
Reluctant late-election-returns air,
Heightened somewhat by the conscience-made
resolve
Of chopping a double armful of wood

As he went in by rear way of the kitchen.
And this resolve he executed;—yet
The hired girl made no comment whatsoever
But went on washing up the supper-things,
Crooning the unutterably sad song, *"Then think,*
Oh, think how lonely this heart must ever be!"
Still, with affected carelessness, the boy
Ranged through the pantry; but the cupboard-door
Was locked. He sighed then like a wet forestick
And went out on the porch.—At least the pump,
He prophesied, would meet him kindly and
Shake hands with him and welcome his return!
And long he held the old tin dipper up—
And oh, how fresh and pure and sweet the draught!
Over the upturned brim, with grateful eyes
He saw the back-yard, in the gathering night,
Vague, dim and lonesome; but it all looked good:
The lightning-bugs, against the grape-vines, blinked
A sort of sallow gladness over his
Home-coming, with this softening of the heart.
He did not leave the dipper carelessly
In the milk-trough.—No: he hung it back upon
Its old nail thoughtfully—even tenderly.
All slowly then he turned and sauntered toward
The rain-barrel at the corner of the house,
And, pausing, peered into it at the few
Faint stars reflected there. Then—moved by some
Strange impulse new to him—he washed his feet.
He then went in the house—straight on into
The very room where sat his parents by

The evening lamp.—The father all intent
Reading his paper, and the mother quite
As intent with her sewing. Neither looked
Up at his entrance—even reproachfully,—
And neither spoke.
The wistful runaway
Drew a long, quavering breath, and then sat down
Upon the extreme edge of a chair. And all
Was very still there for a long, long while.—
Yet everything, someway, seemed *restful*-like
And *homy* and old-fashioned, good and kind,
And sort of *kin* to him!—Only too *still!*
If somebody would *say* something—just *speak*—
Or even rise up suddenly and come
And lift him by the ear sheer off his chair—
Or box his jaws—Lord bless 'em!—*any*thing!—
Was he not there to thankfully accept
Any reception from parental source
Save this incomprehensible *voicelessness?*
O but the silence held its very breath!
If but the ticking clock would only *strike*
And for an instant drown the whispering,
Lisping, sifting sound the katydids
Made outside in the grassy nowhere!
Far
Down some back street he heard the faint halloo
Of boys at their night-game of "Town-fox,"
But now with no desire at all to be
Participating in their sport.—No; no;—
Never again in this world would he want

To join them there!—he only wanted just
To stay in home of nights—Always—always—
Forever and a day!
He moved; and coughed—
Coughed hoarsely, too, through his rolled tongue;
and yet
No vaguest of parental notice or
Solicitude in answer—no response—
No word—no look. O it was deathly still!—
So still it was that really he could not
Remember any prior silence that
At all approached it in profundity
And depth and density of utter hush.
He felt that he himself must break it: So,
Summoning every subtle artifice
Of seeming nonchalance and native ease
And naturalness of utterance to his aid,
And gazing raptly at the house-cat where
She lay curled in her wonted corner of
The hearth-rug, dozing, he spoke airily
And said: "I see you've got the same old cat!"

BEWILDERING EMOTIONS

THE merriment that followed was subdued—
As though the story-teller's attitude
Were dual, in a sense, appealing quite
As much to sorrow as to mere delight,
According, haply, to the listener's bent
Either of sad or merry temperament.—
"And of your two appeals I much prefer
The pathos," said "The Noted Traveler,"—
"For should I live to twice my present years,
I know I could not quite forget the tears
That child-eyes bleed, the little palms nailed wide,
And quivering soul and body crucified. . . .
But, bless them! there are no such children here
To-night, thank God!—Come here to me, my dear!"
He said to little Alex, in a tone
So winning that the sound of it alone
Had drawn a child more loathful to his knee:—
"And, now-sir, *I'll* agree if *you'll* agree,—
You tell us all a story, and then *I*
Will tell one."

"But I can't."

"Well, can't you *try?*"

"Yes, Mister: he *kin* tell *one.* Alex, tell

The one, you know, 'at you made up so well,
About the *Bear.* He allus tells that one,"
Said *Bud,*—"He gits it mixed some 'bout the *gun*
An' *ax* the Little Boy had, an' *apples,* too."—
Then Uncle Mart said—"There, now! that'll do!—
Let *Alex* tell his story his own way!"
And Alex, prompted thus, without delay
Began.

THE BEAR STORY

THAT ALEX "IST MAKED UP HIS-OWN-SE'F"

W'Y, wunst they wuz a Little Boy went out
In the woods to shoot a Bear. So, he went
out
'Way in the grea'-big woods—he did.—An' he
Wuz goin' along—an' goin' along, you know,
An' purty soon he heerd somepin' go *"Wooh!"*—
Ist thataway—*"Woo-ooh!"* An' he wuz *skeered,*
He wuz. An' so he runned an' clumbed a tree—
A grea'-big tree, he did,—a sicka-*more* tree.
An' nen he heerd it ag'in: an' he looked round,
An' *'t'uz a Bear!—a grea'-big shore-'nuff Bear!*—
No: 't'uz *two* Bears, it wuz—two grea'-big Bears—
One of 'em wuz—ist *one's* a *grea'-big* Bear.—
But they ist *boff* went *"Wooh!"*—An' here *they*
come
To climb the tree an' git the Little Boy
An' eat him up!
An' nen the Little Boy
He 'uz skeered worse'n ever! An' here come
The grea'-big Bear a-climbin' th' tree to git
The Little Boy an' eat him up—Oh, *no!*—

It 'uzn't the *Big* Bear 'at clumb the tree—
It 'uz the *Little* Bear. So here *he* come
Climbin' the tree—an' climbin' the tree! Nen when
He git wite *clos't* to the Little Boy, w'y, nen
The Little Boy he ist pulled up his gun
An' *shot* the Bear, he did, an' killed him dead!
An' nen the Bear he falled clean on down out
The tree—away clean to the ground, he did—
Spling-splung! he falled *plum* down, an' killed him,
too!
An' lit wite side o' where the *Big* Bear's at.

An' nen the Big Bear's awful mad, you bet!—
'Cause—'cause the Little Boy he shot his gun
An' killed the *Little* Bear.—'Cause the *Big* Bear
He—he 'uz the Little Bear's Papa.—An' so here
He come to climb the big old tree an' git
The Little Boy an' eat him up! An' when
The Little Boy he saw the *grea'-big Bear*
A-comin', he 'uz badder skeered, he wuz,
Than *any* time! An' so he think he'll climb
Up *higher*—'way up higher in the tree
Than the old *Bear* kin climb, you know.—But he—
He *can't* climb higher 'an old *Bears* kin climb,—
'Cause Bears kin climb up higher in the trees
Than any little Boys in all the Wo-r-r-ld!

An' so here come the grea'-big Bear, he did,—
A'climbin' up—an' up the tree, to git
The Little Boy an' eat him up! An' so
The Little Boy he clumbed on higher, an' higher,

An' higher up the tree—an' higher—an' higher—
An' higher'n iss-here *house* is!—An' here come
The old Bear—clos'ter to him all the time!—
An' nen—first thing you know,—when th' old Big
Bear
Wuz wite clos't to him—nen the Little Boy
Ist jabbed his gun wite in the old Bear's mouf
An' shot an' killed him dead!—No; I *fergot,*—
He didn't shoot the grea'-big Bear at all—
'Cause *they 'uz no load in the gun,* you know—
'Cause when he shot the *Little* Bear, w'y, nen
No load 'uz any more nen *in* the gun!

But th' Little Boy clumbed *higher* up, he did—
He clumbed *lots* higher—an' on up *higher*—an'
higher
An' *higher*—tel he ist *can't* climb no higher,
'Cause nen the limbs 'uz all so little, 'way
Up in the teeny-weeny tip-top of
The tree, they'd break down wiv him ef he don't
Be keerful! So he stop an' think: An' nen
He look around—An' here come the old Bear!
An' so the Little Boy make up his mind
He's got to ist git out o' there *some*way!—
'Cause here come the old Bear!—so clos't, his bref's
Purt' nigh so's he kin feel how hot it is
Ag'inst his bare feet—ist like old "Ring's" bref
When he's be'n out a-huntin' an' 's all tired.
So when th' old Bear's so clos't—the Little Boy
Ist gives a grea'-big jump fer *'nother* tree—
No!—no, he don't do that!—I tell you what

The Little Boy does:—W'y, nen—w'y, he—Oh,
yes!—
The Little Boy *he finds a hole up there*
'At's in the tree—an' climbs in there an' *hides*—
An' *nen* th' old Bear can't find the Little Boy
At all!—but purty soon the old Bear finds
The Little Boy's *gun* 'at's up there—'cause the *gun*
It's too *tall* to tooked wiv him in the hole.
So, when the old Bear find' the *gun,* he knows
The Little Boy's ist *hid* round *somers* there,—
An' th' old Bear 'gins to snuff an' sniff around,
An' sniff an' snuff around—so's he kin find
Out where the Little Boy's hid at.—An' nen—nen—
Oh, *yes!*—W'y, purty soon the old Bear climbs
'Way out on a big limb—a grea'-long limb,—
An' nen the Little Boy climbs out the hole
An' takes his ax an' chops the limb off! . . . Nen
The old Bear falls *k-splunge!* clean to the ground,
An' bu'st an' kill hisse'f plum dead, he did!

An' nen the Little Boy he git his gun
An' 'menced a-climbin' down the tree ag'in—
No!—no, he *didn't* git his *gun*—'cause when
The *Bear* falled, nen the *gun* falled, too—An'
broked
It all to pieces, too!—An' *nicest* gun!—
His Pa ist buyed it!—An' the Little Boy
Ist cried, he did; an' went on climbin' down
The tree—an' climbin' down—an' climbin' down!—
An'-sir! when he 'uz purt' nigh down,—w'y, nen
The old Bear he jumped up ag'in!—an' he

Ain't dead at all—*ist* 'tendin' thataway,
So he kin git the Little Boy an' eat
Him up! But the Little Boy he 'uz too smart
To climb clean *down* the tree.—An' the old Bear
He can't climb *up* the tree no more—'cause when
He fell, he broke one of his—He broke *all*
His legs!—an' nen he *couldn't* climb! But he
Ist won't go 'way an' let the Little Boy
Come down out of the tree. An' the old Bear
Ist growls round there, he does—ist growls an' goes
"Wooh!—woo-ooh!" all the time! An' Little Boy
He haf to stay up in the tree—all night—
An' 'thout no *supper* neever!—Only they
Wuz *apples* on the tree!—An' Little Boy
Et apples—ist all night—an' cried—an' cried!
Nen when 't'uz morning the old Bear went *"Wooh!"*
Ag'in, an' try to climb up in the tree
An' git the Little Boy—But he *can't*
Climb t' save his *soul,* he can't!—An' *oh!* he's
mad!—
He ist tear up the ground! an' go *"Woo-ooh!"*
An'—*Oh, yes!*—purty soon, when morning's come
All *light*—so's you kin *see,* you know,—w'y, nen
The old Bear finds the Little Boy's *gun,* you know,
'At's on the ground.—(An' it ain't broke at all—
I ist *said* that!) An' so the old Bear think
He'll take the gun an' *shoot* the Little Boy:—
But *Bears they* don't know much 'bout shootin'
guns:
So when he go to shoot the Little Boy,
The old Bear got the *other* end the gun

Ag'in' his shoulder, 'stid o' *th' other* end—
So when he try to shoot the Little Boy,
It shot *the Bear,* it did—an' killed him dead!
An' nen the Little Boy clumb down the tree
An' chopped his old woolly head off.—Yes, an'
killed
The *other* Bear ag'in, he did—an' killed
All *boff* the bears, he did—an' tuk 'em home
An' *cooked* 'em, too, an' *et* 'em!
—An' that's all.

THE PATHOS OF APPLAUSE

THE greeting of the company throughout
Was like a jubilee,—the children's shout
And fusillading hand-claps, with great guns
And detonations of the older ones,
Raged to such tumult of tempestuous joy,
It even more alarmed than pleased the boy;
Till, with a sudden twitching lip, he slid
Down to the floor and dodged across and hid
His face against his mother as she raised
Him to the shelter of her heart, and praised
His story in low whisperings, and smoothed
The "amber-colored hair," and kissed and
soothed
And lulled him back to sweet tranquillity—
"An' 'at's a sign 'at you're the Ma fer me!"
He lisped, with gurgling ecstasy, and drew
Her closer, with shut eyes; and feeling, too,
If he could only *purr* now like a cat,
He would undoubtedly be doing that!

"And now"—the serious host said, lifting there
A hand entreating silence;—"now, aware
Of the good promise of our Traveler guest
To add some story with and for the rest,

I think I favor you, and him as well,
Asking a story I have heard him tell,
And know its truth, in each minute detail:"
Then leaning on his guest's chair, with a hale
Hand-pat by way of full endorsement, he
Said, "Yes—the Free-Slave story—certainly."

The old man, with his waddy note-book out,
And glittering spectacles, glanced round about
The expectant circle, and still firmer drew
His hat on, with a nervous cough or two:
And, save at times the big hard words, and tone
Of gathering passion—all the speaker's own,—
The tale that set each childish heart astir
Was thus told by "The Noted Traveler."

TOLD BY "THE NOTED TRAVELER"

COMING, clean from the Maryland-end
Of this great National Road of ours,
Through your vast West; with the time to spend,
Stopping for days in the main towns, where
Every citizen seemed a friend,
And friends grew thick as the wayside flowers,—
I found no thing that I might narrate
More singularly strange or queer
Than a thing I found in your sister-State
Ohio,—at a river-town—down here
In my note-book: *Zanesville—situate*
On the stream Muskingum—broad and clear,
And navigable, through half the year,
North, to Coshocton; south, as far
As Marietta.—But these facts are
Not of the *story,* but the *scene*
Of the simple little tale I mean
To tell *directly*—from this, straight through
To the *end* that is best worth listening to:

Eastward of Zanesville, two or three
Miles from the town, as our stage drove in,
I on the driver's seat, and he
Pointing out this and that to me,—

On beyond us—among the rest—
A grovy slope, and a fluttering throng
Of little children, which he "guessed"
Was a picnic, as we caught their thin
High laughter, as we drove along,
Clearer and clearer. Then suddenly
He turned and asked, with a curious grin,
What were my views on *Slavery? "Why?"*
I asked, in return, with a wary eye.
"Because," he answered, pointing his whip
At a little, whitewashed house and shed
On the edge of the road by the grove ahead,—
"Because there are two slaves *there,"* he said—
"Two Black slaves that I've passed each trip
For eighteen years.—Though they've been set free,
They have been slaves ever since!" said he.
And, as our horses slowly drew
Nearer the little house in view,
All briefly I heard the history
Of this little old Negro woman and
Her husband, house, and scrap of land;
How they were slaves and had been made free
By their dying master, years ago
In old Virginia; and then had come
North here into a *free* State—so,
Safe forever, to found a home—
For themselves alone?—for they left South there
Five strong sons, who had, alas!
All been sold ere it came to pass
This first old master with his last breath
Had freed the *parents.*—(He went to death

Agonized and in dire despair
That the poor slave *children* might not share
Their parents' freedom. And wildly then
He moaned for pardon and died. Amen!)

Thus, with their freedom, and little sum
Of money left them, these two had come
North, full twenty long years ago;
And, settling there, they had hopefully
Gone to work, in their simple way,
Hauling—gardening—raising sweet
Corn, and pop-corn.—Bird and bee
In the garden-blooms and the apple tree
Singing with them throughout the slow
Summer's day, with its dust and heat—
The crops that thirst and the rains that fail;
Or in Autumn chill, when the clouds hung low,
And hand-made hominy might find sale
In the near town-market; or baking pies
And cakes, to range in alluring show
At the little window, where the eyes
Of the Movers' children, driving past,
Grew fixed, till the big white wagons drew
Into a halt that would sometimes last
Even the space of an hour or two—
As the dusty, thirsty travelers made
Their noonings there in the beeches' shade
By the old black Aunty's spring-house, where,
Along with its cooling draughts, were found
Jugs of her famous sweet spruce-beer,
Served with her gingerbread horses there,

While Aunty's snow-white cap bobbed round
Till the children's rapture knew no bound,
As she sang and danced for them, quavering clear
And high the chant of her old slave-days—

> "Oh, Lo'd, Jinny! my toes is so',
> Dancin' on yo' sandy flo'!"

Even so had they wrought all ways
To earn the pennies, and hoard them, too,—
And with what ultimate end in view?—
They were saving up money enough to be
Able, in time, to buy their own
Five children back.
Ah! the toil gone through!
And the long delays and the heartaches, too,
And self-denials that they had known!
But the pride and glory that was theirs
When they first hitched up their shackly cart
For the long, long journey South!—The start
In the first drear light of the chilly dawn,
With no friends gathered in grieving throng,—
With no farewells and favoring prayers;
But, as they creaked and jolted on,
Their chiming voices broke in song—

> "'Hail, all hail! don't you see the stars a-fallin'?
> Hail, all hail! I'm on my way.
> Gideon am
> A healin' ba'm—
> I belong to the blood-washed army.
> Gideon am
> A healin' ba'm—
> On my way!'"

And their *return!*—with their oldest boy
Along with them! Why, their happiness
Spread abroad till it grew a joy
Universal—It even reached
And thrilled the town till the *Church* was stirred
Into suspecting that wrong was wrong!—
And it stayed awake as the preacher preached
A *Real* "Love"-text that he had not long
To ransack for in the Holy Word.
And the son, restored, and welcomed so,
Found service readily in the town;
And, with the parents, sure and slow,
He went "saltin' de cole cash down."

So with the *next* boy—and each one
In turn, till *four* of the five at last
Had been brought back; and, in each case,
With steady work and good homes not
Far from the parents, *they* chipped in
To the family fund, with an equal grace.
Thus they managed and planned and wrought,
And the old folks throve—Till the night before
They were to start for the lone last son
In the rainy dawn—their money fast
Hid away in the house,—two mean,
Murderous robbers burst the door.
. . . Then, in the dark, was a scuffle—a fall—
An old man's gasping cry—and then
A woman's fife-like shriek.
. . . Three men
Splashing by on horseback heard

The summons: And in an instant all
Sprang to their duty, with scarce a word.
And they were *in time*—not only to save
The lives of the old folks, but to bag
Both the robbers, and buck-and-gag
And land them safe in the county jail—
Or, as Aunty said, with a blended awe
And subtlety,—"Safe in de calaboose whah
De dawgs cain't bite 'em!"
—So prevail
The faithful!—So had the Lord upheld
His servants of both deed and prayer,—
His the glory unparalleled—
Theirs the reward,—their every son
Free, at last, as the parents were!
And, as the driver ended there
In front of the little house, I said,
All fervently, "Well done! well done!"
At which he smiled, and turned his head,
And pulled on the leader's lines, and—"See!"
He said,—"you can read old Aunty's sign?"
And, peering down through these specs of mine
On a little, square board-sign, I read:

> "Stop, traveler, if you think it fit,
> And quench your thirst, for a-fi'-penny-bit.—
> The rocky spring is very clear,
> And soon converted into beer."

And, though I read aloud, I could
Scarce hear myself for laugh and shout
Of children—a glad multitude

Of little people, swarming out
Of the picnic-grounds I spoke about.—
And in their rapturous midst, I see
Again—through mists of memory—
An old black Negress laughing up
At the driver, with her broad lips rolled
Back from her teeth, chalk-white, and gums
Redder than reddest red-ripe plums.
He took from her hand the lifted cup
Of clear spring-water, pure and cold,
And passed it to me: And I raised my hat
And drank to her with a reverence that
My conscience knew was justly due
The old black face, and the old eyes, too—
The old black head, with its mossy mat
Of hair, set under its cap and frills
White as the snows on Alpine hills;
Drank to the old *black* smile, but yet
Bright as the sun on the violet,—
Drank to the gnarled and knuckled old
Black hands whose palms had ached and bled
And pitilessly been worn pale
And white almost as the palms that hold
Slavery's lash while the victim's wail
Fails as a crippled prayer might fail.—
Ay, with a reverence infinite,
I drank to the old black face and head—
The old black breast with its life of light—
The old black hide with its heart of gold.

HEAT-LIGHTNING

THERE was a curious quiet for a space
Directly following: and in the face
Of one rapt listener pulsed the flush and glow
Of the heat-lightning that pent passions throw
Long ere the crash of speech.—He broke the spell—
The host:—The Traveler's story, told so well,
He said, had wakened there within his breast
A yearning, as it were, to know *the rest*—
That all unwritten sequence that the Lord
Of Righteousness must write with flame and sword,
Some awful session of His patient thought.
Just then it was, his good old mother caught
His blazing eye—so that its fire became
But as an ember—though it burned the same.
It seemed to her, she said, that she had heard
It was the *Heavenly* Parent never erred,
And not the *earthly* one that had such grace:
"Therefore, my son," she said, with lifted face
And eyes, "let no one dare anticipate
The Lord's intent. While *He* waits, *we* will
wait."
And with a gust of reverence genuine

Then Uncle Mart was aptly ringing in—
"'If the darkened heavens lower,
Wrap thy cloak around thy form;
Though the tempest rise in power,
God is mightier than the storm!'"
Which utterance reached the restive children all
As something humorous. And then a call
For *him* to tell a story, or to "say
A funny piece." His face fell right away:
He knew no story worthy. Then he must
Declaim for them: In that, he could not trust
His memory. And then a happy thought
Struck some one, who reached in his vest and brought
Some scrappy clippings into light and said
There was a poem of Uncle Mart's he read
Last April in "The Sentinel." He had
It there in print, and knew all would be glad
To hear it rendered by the author.

And,
All reasons for declining at command
Exhausted, the now helpless poet rose
And said: "I am discovered, I suppose.
Though I have taken all precautions not
To sign my name to any verses wrought
By my transcendent genius, yet, you see,
Fame wrests my secret from me bodily;
So I must needs confess I did this deed
Of poetry red-handed, nor can plead
One whit of unintention in my crime—
My guilt of rhythm and my glut of rhyme.—

"'Mæonides rehearsed a tale of arms,
And Naso told of curious meta*mur*phoses;
Unnumbered pens have pictured woman's charms,
While crazy *I*'ve made poetry *on purposes!*'

In other words, I stand convicted—need
I say—by my own doing, as I read."

UNCLE MART'S POEM

THE OLD SNOW-MAN

HO! the old Snow-Man
That Noey Bixler made!
He looked as fierce and sassy
As a soldier on parade!—
'Cause Noey, when he made him,
While we all wuz gone, you see,
He made him, jist a-purpose,
Jist as fierce as he could be!—
But when we all got *ust* to him,
Nobody wuz afraid
Of the old Snow-Man
That Noey Bixler made!

'Cause Noey told us 'bout him
And what he made him fer:—
He'd come to feed, that morning
He found we wuzn't here;
And so the notion struck him,
When we all come taggin' home
'T'ud *s'prise* us ef a' old Snow-Man
'Ud meet us when we come!
So, when he'd fed the stock, and milked,
And be'n back home, and chopped

His wood, and et his breakfast, he
  Jist grabbed his mitts and hopped
Right in on that-air old Snow-Man
  That he laid out he'd make
Er bu'st a trace *a-tryin'*—jist
  Fer old-acquaintance-sake!—
    But work like that wuz lots more fun,
      He said, than when he played!
    Ho! the old Snow-Man
      That Noey Bixler made!

He started with a big snowball,
  And rolled it all around;
And as he rolled, more snow 'ud stick
  And pull up off the ground.—
He rolled and rolled all round the yard—
  'Cause we could see the *track,*
All wher' the snow come off, you know,
  And left it wet and black.
He got the Snow-Man's *legs-part* rolled—
  In front the kitchen-door,—
And then he hat to turn in then
  And roll and roll some more!—
He rolled the yard all round ag'in,
  And round the house, at that—
Clean round the house and back to wher'
  The blame legs-half wuz at!
    He said he missed his dinner, too—
      Jist clean fergot and stayed
    There workin'. Oh! the old Snow-Man
      That Noey Bixler made!

And Noey said he hat to *hump*
  To git the *top-half* on
The *legs-half!*—When he *did,* he said,
  His wind wuz purt' nigh gone.—
He said, i jucks! he jist drapped down
  There on the old porch-floor
And panted like a dog!—And then
  He up! and rolled some more!—
The *last* batch—that wuz fer his head,—
  And—time he'd got it right
And clumb and fixed it on, he said—
  He hat to quit fer night!—
And *then,* he said, he'd kep' right on
  Ef they'd be'n any *moon*
To work by! So he crawled in bed—
  And *could* 'a' slep' tel *noon,*
    He wuz so plum wore out! he said,—
      But it wuz washin'-day,
    And hat to cut a cord o' wood
      'Fore he could git away!

But, last, he got to work ag'in,—
  With spade, and gouge, and hoe,
And trowel, too—(All tools 'ud do
  What *Noey* said, you know!)
He cut his eyebrows out like cliffs—
  And his cheek-bones and chin
Stuck *furder* out—and his old *nose*
  Stuck out as fur-ag'in!
He made his eyes o' walnuts,
  And his whiskers out o' this-

Here buggy-cushion stuffin'—*moss,*
The teacher says it is.
And then he made a' old wood' gun,
Set keerless-like, you know,
Acrost one shoulder—kind o' like
Big Foot, er Adam Poe—
Er, mayby, Simon Girty,
The dinged old Renegade!
Wooh! the old Snow-Man
That Noey Bixler made!

And there he stood, all fierce and grim,
A stern, heroic form:
What was the winter blast to him,
And what the driving storm?—
What wonder that the children pressed
Their faces at the pane
And scratched away the frost, in pride
To look on him again?—
What wonder that, with yearning bold,
Their all of love and care
Went warmest through the keenest cold
To that Snow-Man out there!

But the old Snow-Man—
What a dubious delight
He grew at last when Spring came on
And days waxed warm and bright!—
Alone he stood—all kith and kin
Of snow and ice were gone;—

Alone, with constant tear-drops in
  His eyes and glittering on
His thin, pathetic beard of black—
  Grief in a hopeless cause!—
Hope—hope is for the man that *dies*—
  What for the man that *thaws!*
    O Hero of a hero's make!—
      Let *marble* melt and fade,
    But never *you*—you old Snow-Man
      That Noey Bixler made!

"LITTLE JACK JANITOR"

AND there, in that ripe Summer night, once more
A wintry coolness through the open door
And window seemed to touch each glowing face
Refreshingly; and, for a fleeting space,
The quickened fancy, through the fragrant air,
Saw snowflakes whirling where the rose-leaves were,
And sounds of veriest jingling bells again
Were heard in tinkling spoons and glasses then.

Thus Uncle Mart's old poem sounded young
And crisp and fresh and clear as when first sung,
Away back in the wakening of Spring,
When his rhyme and the robin, chorusing,
Rumored, in duo-fanfare, of the soon
Invading Johnny-jump-ups, with platoon
On platoon of sweet-williams, marshaled fine
To bloomèd blarings of the trumpet-vine.

The poet turned to whisperingly confer
A moment with "The Noted Traveler,"
Then left the room, tripped up the stairs, and then
An instant later reappeared again,
Bearing a little, lacquered box, or chest,

Which, as all marked with curious interest,
He gave to the old Traveler, who in
One hand upheld it, pulling back his thin
Black luster coat-sleeves, saying he had sent
Up for his "Magic Box," and that he meant
To test it there—especially to show
The Children. "It is *empty now,* you know."—
He thumped it with his knuckles, so they heard
The hollow sound—"But lest it be inferred
It is not *really* empty, I will ask
Little Jack Janitor, whose pleasant task
It is to keep it ship-shape."
Then he tried
And rapped the little drawer in the side,
And called out sharply, "Are you in there,
Jack?"
And then a little, squeaky voice came back,—
"Of course I'm in here—ain't you got the key
Turned on me!"
Then the Traveler leisurely
Felt through his pockets, and at last took out
The smallest key they ever heard about!—
It wasn't any longer than a pin:
And this at last he managed to fit in
The little keyhole, turned it, and then cried,
"Is everything swept out clean there inside?"
"Open the drawer and see! Don't talk so much;
Or else," the little voice squeaked, *"talk in Dutch—*
You age me, asking questions!"
Then the man
Looked hurt, so that the little folks began

To feel so sorry for him, he put down
His face against the box and had to frown.—
"Come, sir!" he called,—"no impudence to *me!*—
You've swept out clean?"
"Open the drawer and see!"
And so he drew the drawer out: Nothing there
But just the empty drawer, stark and bare.
He shoved it back again, with a sharp click.—

"Ouch!" yelled the little voice—*"unsnap it—*
quick!—
You've got my nose pinched in the crack!"
And then
The frightened man drew out the drawer again,
The little voice exclaiming, *"Jee-mun-nee!—*
Say what you want, but please don't murder me!"
"Well, then," the man said, as he closed the drawer
With care, "I want some cotton-batting for
My supper! Have you got it?"
And inside,
All muffled-like, the little voice replied,
"Open the drawer and see!"
And, sure enough,
He drew it out, filled with the cotton stuff.
He then asked for a candle to be brought
And held for him; and tuft by tuft he caught
And lit the cotton, and, while blazing, took
It in his mouth and ate it, with a look
Of purest satisfaction.
"Now," said he,

"I've eaten the drawer empty, let me see
What this is in my mouth:" And with both hands
He began drawing from his lips long strands
Of narrow silken ribbons, every hue
And tint;—and crisp they were and bright and new
As if just purchased at some Fancy-Store.
"And now, Bub, bring your cap," he said, "before
Something might happen!" And he stuffed the cap
Full of the ribbons. *"There,* my little chap,
Hold *tight* to them," he said, "and take them to
The ladies there, for they know what to do
With all such rainbow finery!"
He smiled
Half sadly, as it seemed, to see the child
Open his cap first to his mother. . . . There
Was not a ribbon in it anywhere!
"Jack Janitor!" the man said sternly through
The Magic Box—"Jack Janitor, did *you*
Conceal those ribbons anywhere?"
"Well, yes,"
The little voice piped—*"but you'd never guess*
The place I hid 'em if you'd guess a year!"

"Well, won't you *tell* me?"
"Not until you clear
Your mean old conscience," said the voice, *"and make*
Me first do something for the Children's sake."

"Well, then, fill up the drawer," the Traveler said,
"With whitest white on earth and reddest red!—
Your terms accepted—Are you satisfied?"

"Open the drawer and see!" the voice replied.

"Why, bless my soul!"—the man said, as he drew
The contents of the drawer into view—
"It's level-full of *candy!*—Pass it round—
Jack Janitor shan't steal *that,* I'll be bound!"—
He raised and crunched a stick of it, and
smacked
His lips.—"Yes, that *is* candy, for a fact!—
And it's all *yours!"*
And how the children there
Lit into it!—O never anywhere
Was such a feast of sweetness!
"And now, then,"
The man said, as the empty drawer again
Slid to its place, he bending over it,—
"Now, then, Jack Janitor, before we quit
Our entertainment for the evening, tell
Us where you hid the ribbons—can't you?"
"Well,"
The squeaky little voice drawled sleepily—
"Under your old hat, maybe.—Look and see!"

All carefully the man took off his hat:
But there was not a ribbon under that.—
He shook his heavy hair, and all in vain
The old white hat—then put it on again:

"Now, tell me, *honest,* Jack, where *did* you hide
The ribbons?"
"Under your hat," the voice replied.—
"Mind! I said 'under' and not 'in' it.—Won't
You ever take the hint on earth?—or don't
You want to show folks where the ribbon's at?—
Law! but I'm sleepy!—Under—unner yer hat!"

Again the old man carefully took off
The empty hat, with an embarrassed cough,
Saying, all gravely, to the children: "You
Must promise not to *laugh*—you'll all *want* to—
When you see where Jack Janitor has dared
To hide those ribbons—when he might have spared
My feelings.—But no matter!—Know the worst—
Here are the ribbons, as I feared at first."—
And, quick as snap of thumb and finger, there
The old man's head had not a sign of hair,
And in his lap a wig of iron-gray
Lay, stuffed with all that glittering array
Of ribbons. . . . "Take 'em to the ladies—Yes.
Good night to everybody, and God bless
The Children."
In a whisper no one missed
The Hired Man yawned: "He's a vantrilloquist."

. . . . . .

So gloried all the night. Each trundle-bed
And pallet was enchanted—each child-head
Was packed with happy dreams. And long before
The dawn's first far-off rooster crowed, the snore
Of Uncle Mart was stilled, as round him pressed

The bare arms of the wakeful little guest
That he had carried home with him. . . .
"I think,"
An awed voice said—"(No: I don't want a
dwink.—
Lay still.)—I think 'The Noted Traveler' he
'S the inscrutibul-est man I ever see!"

ST. LIRRIPER

WHEN Dickens first dawned on us. . . . Hey! to wake
On such a morning *now,* to rise and break
Brain-fast on such an appetizing spread
As Mrs. Lirriper, the unconscious head
And front of kindliest humanity—
With *"Jemmy Jackman, m'am,"* full courteously
Saluting *"After you, m'am"; and "Our boy"*—
The *Junior* Jemmy, with the zest and joy
So strangely born out of the hopeless state
Of sacred motherhood made violate,
Yet glorified by the compassion of
The mortal, answering the Immortal love.
Writing like this must be, not from the wrist,
But from the heart no reader may resist.

1840

"THEM OLD CHEERY WORDS"

PAP he allus ust to say,
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"
Liked to hear him thataway,
In his old split-bottomed cheer
By the fireplace here at night—
Wood all in,—and room all bright,
Warm and snug, and folks all here:
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"

Me and 'Lize, and Warr'n and Jess
And Eldory home fer two
Weeks' vacation; and, I guess,
Old folks tickled through and through,
Same as *we* was,—"Home onc't more
Fer another Chris'mus—shore!"
Pap 'ud say, and tilt his cheer,—
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"

Mostly Pap was ap' to be
  Ser'ous in his "daily walk,"
As he called it; giner'ly
  Was no hand to joke er talk.
Fac's is, Pap had never be'n
Rugged-like at all—and then
Three years in the army had
Hepped to break him purty bad.

Never *flinched!* but frost and snow
  Hurt his wownd in winter. But
You bet *Mother* knowed it, though!—
  Watched his feet, and made him putt
On his flannen; and his knee,
Where it never healed up, he
Claimed was "well now—mighty near—
Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"

"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"
  Pap 'ud say, and snap his eyes . . . .
Row o' apples sputter'n' here
  Round the hearth, and me and 'Lize
Crackin' hicker'-nuts; and Warr'n
And Eldory parchin' corn;
And whole raft o' young folks here.
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"

Mother tuk most comfort in
  Jes' a-he'ppin' Pap: She'd fill
His pipe fer him, er his tin
  O' hard cider; er set still
And read fer him out the pile
O' newspapers putt on file
Whilse he was with Sherman—(She
Knowed the whole war-history!)

Sometimes he'd git het up some.—
  "Boys," he'd say, "and you girls, too,
Chris'mus is about to come;
  So, as you've a right to do,
Celebrate it! Lots has died,
Same as Him they crucified,
That you might be happy here.
Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"

Missed his voice last Chris'mus—missed
  Them old cheery words, you know!
Mother helt up tel she kissed
  All of us—then had to go
And break down! And I laughs: "Here!
'Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!'"
"Them's his very words," sobbed she,
"When he asked to marry me."

"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"—
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"
Over, over, still I hear,
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"
Yit, like him, I'm goin' to smile
And keep cheerful all the while:
Allus Chris'mus *There*—And here
"Chris'mus comes but onc't a year!"

A DUBIOUS "OLD KRISS"

US-FOLKS is purty pore—but Ma
She's waitin'—two years more—tel Pa
He serves his term out. Our Pa he—
He's in the Penitenchurrie!

Now don't you tell!—'cause *Sis,*
The *baby, she* don't know he is.—
'Cause she wuz only four, you know,
He kissed her last an' hat to go!

Pa alluz liked Sis best of all
Us childern.—'Spect it's 'cause she fall
When she 'uz ist a *child,* one day—
An' make her back look thataway.

Pa—'fore he be a burglar—he's
A locksmiff, an' maked locks, an' keys,
An' knobs you pull fer bells to ring,
An' he could ist make *anything!*—

'Cause our Ma *say* he can!—*An'* this
Here little pair of crutches Sis
Skips round on—Pa maked *them*—yes-sir!—
An' silivur-plate-name here fer her!

Pa's out o' work when Chris'mus come
One time, an' stay away from home,
An' 's drunk an' 'buse our Ma, an' swear
They ain't no "Old Kriss" anywhere!

An' Sis she alluz say they *wuz*
A' Old Kriss—an' she alluz does.
But ef they *is* a' Old Kriss, why,
When's Chris'mus, Ma she alluz *cry*!

This Chris'mus *now,* we live here in
Where Ma's rent's alluz due ag'in—
An' she "ist slaves"—I heerd her say
She did—ist them words thataway!

An' th'other night, when all's so cold
An' stove's 'most out—our Ma she rolled
Us in th' old feather-bed an' said,
"To-morry's Chris'mus—go to bed,

"An' thank yer blessed stars fer this—
We don't *'spect* nothin' from old Kriss!"
An' cried, an' locked the door, an' prayed,
An' turned the lamp down. . . . An' I laid

There, thinkin' in the dark ag'in,
"Ef *wuz* Old Kriss, he can't git in,
'Cause ain't no chimbly here at all—
Ist old stovepipe struck frue the wall!"

I sleeped nen.—An' wuz dreamin' some
When I waked up an' mornin' 's come,—
Fer our Ma she wuz settin' square
Straight up in bed, a-readin' there

Some letter 'at she'd read, an' quit,
An' nen hold like she's huggin' it.—
An' diamon' ear-rings she don't *know*
Wuz in her ears tel I say so—

An' wake the rest up. An' the sun
In frue the winder dazzle-un
Them eyes o' Sis's, wiv a sure-
Enough gold chain Old Kriss bringed to 'er!

An' *all* of us git gold things!—Sis,
Though, say she know it *"ain't* Old Kriss—
He kissed her, so she waked an' saw
Him skite out—an' it wuz her Pa."

YOUR HEIGHT IS OURS

TO RICHARD HENRY STODDARD, AT THE STODDARD BANQUET BY THE AUTHORS CLUB, NEW YORK, MARCH 25, 1897

O PRINCELY poet!—kingly heir
Of gifts divinely sent,—
Your own!—nor envy anywhere,
Nor voice of discontent.

Though, of ourselves, all poor are we,
And frail and weak of wing,
Your height is ours—your ecstasy—
Your glory, when you sing.

Most favored of the gods, and great
In gifts beyond our store,
We covet not your rich estate,
But prize our own the more.—

The gods give as but gods may do—
We count *our* riches thus,—
They gave their richest gifts to you,
And then gave you to us.

1848

HYMN EXULTANT

FOR EASTER

VOICE of Mankind, sing over land and sea—
  Sing, in this glorious morn!
The long, long night is gone from Calvary—
  The cross, the thong and thorn;
The sealed tomb yields up its saintly guest,
No longer to be burdened and oppressed.

Heart of Mankind, thrill answer to His own,
  So human, yet divine!
For earthly love He left His heavenly throne—
  For love like thine and mine—
For love of us, as one might kiss a bride,
His lifted lips touched death's, all satisfied.

Soul of Mankind, He wakes—He lives once more!
  O soul, with heart and voice
Sing! sing!—the stone rolls chorus from the door—
  Our Lord stands forth.—Rejoice!
Rejoice, O garden-land of song and flowers;
Our King returns to us, forever ours!

1849

"O LIFE! O BEYOND!"

STRANGE—strange, O mortal Life,
The perverse gifts that came to me from you!
From childhood I have wanted *all* good things:
You gave me few.

You gave me faith in One—
Divine—above your own imperious might,
O mortal Life, while I but wanted you
And your delight.

I wanted dancing feet,
And flowery, grassy paths by laughing streams;
You gave me loitering steps, and eyes all blurred
With tears and dreams.

I wanted love,—and, lo!
As though in mockery, you gave me loss.
O'erburdened sore, I wanted rest: you gave
The heavier cross.

I wanted one poor hut
For mine own home, to creep away into:
You gave me only lonelier desert lands
To journey through.

1850

Now, at the last vast verge
  Of barren age, I stumble, reel, and fling
Me down, with strength all spent and heart athirst
    And famishing.

Yea, now, Life, deal me death,—
  Your worst—your vaunted worst! . . . Across
    my breast
With numb and fumbling hands I gird me for
    The best.

OUR QUEER OLD WORLD

Fer them 'at's here in airliest infant stages,
It's a hard world:
Fer them 'at gits the knocks of boyhood's ages,
It's a mean world:
Fer them 'at nothin's good enough they're gittin',
It's a bad world:
Fer them 'at learns at last what's right and fittin',
It's a good world.

—The Hired Man

IT'S a purty hard world you find, my child—
It's a purty hard world you find!
You fight, little rascal! and kick and squall,
And snort out medicine, spoon and all!
When you're here longer you'll change your mind
And simmer down sort o' half-rickonciled.
But *now*—Jee!-
My!-mun-nee!
It's a purty hard world, my child!

It's a purty mean world you're in, my lad—
It's a purty mean world you're in!
We know, of course, in your schoolboy-days
It's a world of too many troublesome ways
Of tryin' things over and startin' ag'in,—

Yit *your* chance beats what your *parents* had.
But *now*—Oh!
Fire-and-tow!
It's a purty mean world, my lad!

It's a purty bad world you've struck, young chap—
It's a purty bad world you've struck—
But *study* the cards that you hold, you know,
And your hopes will sprout and your mustache grow,
And your store-clothes likely will change your luck,
And you'll rake a rich ladybird into your lap!
But *now*—Doubt
All things out.—
It's a purty bad world, young chap!

It's a purty good world this is, old man—
It's a purty good world this is!
For all its follies and shows and lies—
Its rainy weather, and cheeks likewise,
And age, hard-hearin' and rheumatiz.—
We're not a-faultin' the Lord's own plan—
All things 's jest
At their best.—
It's a purty good world, old man!

ON A YOUTHFUL PORTRAIT OF STEVENSON

A FACE of youth mature; a mouth of tender,
Sad, human sympathy, yet something stoic
In clasp of lip: wide eyes of calmest splendor,
And brow serenely ample and heroic:—
The features—all—lit with a soul ideal . . .
O visionary boy! what were you seeing,
What hearing, as you stood thus midst the real
Ere yet one master-work of yours had being?

Is it a foolish fancy that we humor—
Investing daringly with life and spirit
This youthful portrait of you ere one rumor
Of your great future spoke that men might hear it?—
Is it a fancy, or your first of glories,
That you were listening, and the camera drew you
Hearing the voices of your untold stories
And all your lovely poems calling to you?

PROEM

We found him in that Far-away that yet to us seems near—
We vagrants of but yesterday when idlest youth was here,—
When lightest song and laziest mirth possessed us through and through,
And all the dreamy summer-earth seemed drugged with morning dew:

When our ambition scarce had shot a stalk or blade indeed:
Yours,—choked as in the garden-spot you still deferred to "weed":
Mine,—but a pipe half-cleared of pith—as now it flats and whines
In sympathetic cadence with a hiccough in the lines.

Ay, even then—O timely hour!—the High Gods did confer
In our behalf:—And, clothed in power, lo, came their Courier—
Not winged with flame nor shod with wind,—but ambling down the pike,
Horseback, with saddle-bags behind, and guise all human-like.

1855

And it was given us to see, beneath his rustic rind,
A native force and mastery of such inspiring kind,
That half unconsciously we made obeisance.—Smiling, thus
His soul shone from his eyes and laid its glory over us.

. . . . . .

Though, faring still that Far-away that yet to us seems near,
His form, through mists of yesterday, fades from the vision here,
Forever as he rides, it is in retinue divine,—
The hearts of all his time are his, with your hale heart and mine.

RUBÁIYÁT

OF

DOC SIFERS

I

IF you don't know Doc Sifers I'll jes' argy,
here and now,
You've bin a mighty little while about here, anyhow,
'Cause Doc he's rid these roads and woods—er
swum 'em, now and then—
And practised in this neighberhood sence hain't no
tellin' when!

II

In radius o' fifteen mil'd, all p'ints o' compass round,
No man er woman, chick er child, er team, on top o'
ground,
But knows *him*—yes, and got respects and likin'
fer him, too,
Fer all his so-to-speak dee-fects o' genius showin'
through!

1857

III

Some claims he's absent-minded; some has said
they wuz afeard
To take his powders when he come and dosed 'em
out, and 'peared
To have his mind on somepin' else—like County
Ditch, er some
New way o' tannin' mussrat-pelts, er makin' butter
come.

IV

He's cur'ous—they hain't no mistake about it!—but
he's got
Enough o' extry brains to make a *jury*—like as not.
They's no *describin'* Sifers,—fer, when all is said
and done,
He's jes' *hisse'f Doc Sifers*—ner they hain't no
other one!

V

Doc's allus sociable, polite, and 'greeable, you'll
find—
Pervidin' ef you strike him right and nothin' on his
mind,—
Like in some *hurry,* when they've sent fer Sifers
quick, you see,
To 'tend some sawmill-accident, er picnic jamboree;

VI

Er when the lightin' 's struck some harebrained
harvest-hand; er in
Some 'tempt o' suicidin'—where they'd ort to try
ag'in!
I've *knowed* Doc haul up from a trot and talk a'
hour er two
When railly he'd a-ort o' not a-stopped fer
"Howdy-do!"

VII

And then, I've met him 'long the road, *a-lopin'*,—
starin' straight
Ahead,—and yit he never knowed me when I
hollered *"Yate,*
Old Saddlebags!" all hearty-like, er *"Who you goin'*
to kill?"
And he'd say nothin'—only hike on faster, starin'
still!

VIII

I'd bin insulted, many a time, ef I jes' wuzn't shore
Doc didn't mean a thing. And I'm not tetchy any
more
Sence that-air day, ef he'd a-jes' a-stopped to jaw
with *me,*
They'd bin a little dorter less in my own fambily!

IX

Times *now*, at home, when Sifers' name comes up, I
jes' *let on,*
You know, 'at *I* think Doc's to *blame,* the way he's
bin and gone
And disapp'inted folks—'Ll-*jee*-mun-*nee!* you'd ort
to then
Jes' hear my wife light into me—*"ongratefulest o'
men!"*

X

'Mongst *all* the women—mild er rough, splendifer-
ous er plain,
Er them *with* sense, er not enough to come in out
the rain,—
Jes' ever' shape and build and style o' women, fat
er slim—
They all like Doc, and got a smile and pleasant word
fer *him!*

XI

Ner hain't no horse I've ever saw but what'll neigh
and try
To sidle up to him, and paw, and sense him, ear-
and-eye:
Then jes' a tetch o' Doc's old pa'm, to pat 'em, er to
shove
Along their nose—and they're as ca'm as any cooin'
dove!

XII

And same with *dogs,*—take any breed, er strain, er pedigree,
Er racial caste 'at can't concede no use fer you er me,—
They'll putt all predju-dice aside in *Doc's* case and go in
Kahoots with him, as satisfied as he wuz kith-and-kin!

XIII

And Doc's a wonder, trainin' pets!—He's got a chicken-hawk,
In kind o' half-cage, where he sets out in the gyarden-walk,
And got that wild bird trained so tame, he'll loose him, and he'll fly
Clean to the woods!—Doc calls his name—and he'll come, by and by!

XIV

Some says no money down 'ud buy that bird o' Doc.—Ner no
Inducement to the *bird,* says I, 'at *he'd* let *Sifers* go!
And Doc *he* say 'at *he's* content—long as a bird o' prey
Kin 'bide *him,* it's a *compliment,* and takes it thataway.

XV

But, gittin' back to *docterin'*—all the sick and in distress,
And old and pore, and weak and small, and lone and motherless,—
I jes' tell *you* I 'preciate the man 'at's got the love
To "go ye forth and ministrate!" as Scriptur' tells us of.

XVI

Dull times, Doc jes' *mi*anders round, in that old rig o' his:
And hain't no tellin' where he's bound ner guessin' where he is;
He'll drive, they tell, jes' thataway fer maybe six er eight
Days at a stretch; and neighbers say he's bin clean round the State.

XVII

He picked a' old tramp up, one trip, 'bout eighty mil'd from here,
And fetched him home and k-yored his hip, and kep' him 'bout a year;
And feller said—in all *his* ja'nts round this terreschul ball
'At no man wuz a *circumstance* to *Doc!*—he topped 'em all!—

"Doc jes' mianders round in that old rig o' his"

XVIII

Said, bark o' trees 's a' open book to Doc, and vines and moss
He read like writin'—with a look knowed ever' dot and cross:
Said, stars at night wuz jes' as good's a compass: said, he s'pose
You couldn't lose Doc in the woods the darkest night that blows!

XIX

Said, Doc'll tell you, purty clos't, by underbresh and plants,
How fur off *warter* is,—and 'most perdict the sort o' chance
You'll have o' findin' *fish;* and how they're liable to *bite,*
And whether they're a-bitin' now, er only after night.

XX

And, whilse we're talkin' *fish,*—I mind they formed a fishin'-crowd
(When folks *could* fish 'thout gittin' *fined,* and seinin' wuz allowed!)
O' leadin' citizens, you know, to go and seine "Old Blue"—
But hadn't no big seine, and so—w'y, what wuz they to do? . . .

XXI

And Doc he say he thought 'at *he* could ***knit*** a stitch
er two—
"Bring the *materials* to me—'at's all I'm astin' you!"
And down he sets—six weeks, i jing! and knits
that seine plum done—
Made corks too, brails and ever'thing—good as a
boughten one!

XXII

Doc's *public* sperit—when the sick's not takin' *all*
his time
And he's got *some* fer politics—is simple yit
sublime:—
He'll *talk* his *principles*—and they air *honest;*—but
the sly
Friend strikes him first, election-day, he'd 'commo-
date, er die!

XXIII

And yit, though Doc, as all men knows, is square
straight up and down,
That vote o' his is—well, I s'pose—the cheapest one
in town;—
A fact 'at's sad to verify, as could be done on oath—
I've voted Doc myse'f—*And I was criminal fer*
both!

XXIV

You kin corrupt the *ballot-box*—corrupt *yourse'f,*
as well—
Corrupt *some* neighbers,—but old Doc's as oncor-
ruptible
As Holy Writ. So putt a pin right there!—Let
Sifers be,
I jucks! he wouldn't vote ag'in' his own worst
inimy!

XXV

When Cynthy Eubanks laid so low with fever, and
Doc Glenn
Told Euby Cynth 'ud haf to go—they sends fer
Sifers then! . . .
Doc sized the case: "She's starved," says he, "fer
warter—yes, and *meat!*
The treatment 'at she'll git from *me's* all she kin
drink and eat!"

XXVI

He orders Euby then to split some wood, and take
and build
A fire in kitchen-stove, and git a young spring-
chicken killed;
And jes' whirled in and th'owed his hat and coat
there on the bed,
And warshed his hands and sailed in that-air
kitchen, Euby said,

XXVII

And biled that chicken-broth, and got that dinner—
all complete
And clean and crisp and good and hot as mortal
ever eat!
And Cynth and Euby both'll say 'at Doc'll git as
good
Meals-vittles up, jes' any day, as any *woman* could!

XXVIII

Time Sister Abbick tuk so bad with striffen o' the
lung,
P'tracted Meetin', where she had jes' shouted,
prayed, and sung
All winter long, through snow and thaw,—when
Sifers come, says he:
"No, M'lissy; don't poke out your raw and cloven
tongue at me!—

XXIX

"I know, without no symptoms but them *injarubber-
shoes*
You promised me to never putt a fool-foot in ner
use
At purril o' your life!" he said. "And I won't save
you *now*,
Onless—here on your dyin' bed—you consecrate
your vow!"

XXX

Without a-claimin' *any creed,* Doc's rail religious views
Nobody knows—ner got no *need* o' knowin' whilse he choose
To be heerd not of man, ner raise no loud, vain-glorious prayers
In crowded marts, er public ways, er—i jucks, *any*wheres!—

XXXI

'Less'n it *is* away deep down in his own heart, at night,
Facin' the storm, when all the town's a-sleepin' snug and tight—
Him splashin' hence from scenes o' pride and sloth and gilded show,
To some pore sufferer's bedside o' anguish, don't you know!

XXXII

Er maybe dead o' *winter*—makes no odds to *Doc,*—he's got
To face the weather ef it takes the hide off! 'cause he'll not
Lie out o' goin' and p'tend he's sick hisse'f—like *some*
'At I could name 'at folks might send fer and they'd *never* come!

XXXIII

Like pore Phin Hoover—when he goes to that last
dance o' his!
That Chris'mus when his feet wuz froze—and Doc
saved all they is
Left of 'em—"'Nough," as Phin say now, "to
track me by, and be
A adver*tise*ment, anyhow, o' what Doc's done fer
me!—

XXXIV

"When *he* come—knife-and-saw"—Phin say, "I
knowed, ef I'd the spunk,
'At Doc 'ud fix me up *some* way, ef nothin' but my
trunk
Wuz left, he'd fasten *casters* in, and have me,
spick-and-span,
A-skootin' round the streets ag'in as spry as any
man!"

XXXV

Doc sees a patient's *got* to quit—he'll ease him down
serene
As dozin' off to sleep, and yit not dope him with
mor*pheen*.—
He won't tell *what*—jes' 'lows 'at he has "airnt the
right to sing
'O grave, where is thy victery! O death, where is
thy sting!'"

XXXVI

And, mind ye now!—it's not in scoff and scorn, by long degree,
'At Doc gits things like that-un off: it's jes' his *shority*
And total faith in Life to Come,—w'y, "from that *Land o' Bliss,"*
He says, "we'll haf to chuckle some, a-lookin' back at this!"

XXXVII

And, still in p'int, I mind, one *night o' 'nitiation* at
Some secert lodge, 'at Doc set right down on 'em, square and flat,
When they mixed up some Scriptur' and wuz *funnin'*-like—w'y, he
Lit in 'em with a rep'imand 'at ripped 'em, A to Z!

XXXVIII

And onc't—when gineral loafin'-place wuz old Shoe-Shop—and all
The gang 'ud git in there and brace their backs ag'inst the wall
And *settle* questions that had went onsettled long enough,—
Like "wuz no Heav'n—ner no torment"—***jes' talkin' awful rough!***

XXXIX

There wuz Sloke Haines and old Ike Knight and
Coonrod Simmes—all three
Ag'inst the Bible and the Light, and scoutin' Deity.
"Science," says Ike, "it DIM*onstrates*—it takes
nobody's word—
Scriptur' er not,—it *'vestigates* ef sich things could
occurred!"

XL

Well, Doc he heerd this,—he'd drapped in a minute,
fer to git
A tore-off heel pegged on ag'in,—and, as he stood
on it
And stomped and grinned, he says to Ike, "I s'pose
now, purty soon
Some lightin'-bug, indignant-like, 'll 'vestigate the
moon! . . .

XLI

"No, Ike," says Doc, "this world hain't saw no
brains like yourn and mine
With sense enough to grasp a law 'at takes a brain
divine.—
I've bared the thoughts of brains in doubt, and felt
their finest pulse,—
And mortal brains jes' won't turn out omnipotent
results!"

XLII

And Doc he's got respects to spare the *rich* as well as *pore*—
Says he, "I'd turn no *millionnaire* onsheltered from my door."—
Says he, "What's wealth to him in quest o' *honest* friends to back
And love him fer *hisse'f?*—not jes' because he's made his jack!"

XLIII

And childern.—*Childern?* Lawzy-day! Doc *worships* 'em!—You call
Round at his house and *ast* 'em!—they're a-*swarmin'* there—that's all!—
They're in his *Lib*'ry—in best room—in kitchen—fur and near,—
In office too, and, I p'sume, his operatin'-cheer!

XLIV

You know they's men 'at *bees* won't sting?—They's plaguy *few,*—But Doc
He's one o' *them.*—And same, i jing! with *childern;*—they jes' flock
Round Sifers *natchurl!*—in his lap, and in his pockets, too,
And in his old fur mitts and cap, and *heart* as warm and true!

XLV

It's cur'ous, too,—'cause Doc hain't got no childern
of his own—
'Ceptin' the ones he's tuk and brought up, 'at's
bin left alone
And orphans when their father died, er mother,—
and Doc he
Has he'pped their dyin' satisfied.—"The child shall
live with me

XLVI

"And Winniferd, my wife," he'd say, and stop right
there, and cle'r
His th'oat, and go on thinkin' way *some* mother-
hearts down here
Can't never feel *their own* babe's face a-pressin'
'em, ner make
Their naked breasts a restin'-place fer any baby's
sake.

XLVII

Doc's *Lib*'ry—as he calls it,—well, they's ha'f-a-
dozen she'ves
Jam-full o' books—I couldn't tell *how* many—count
yourse'ves!
One whole she'f's Works on Medicine! and most the
rest's about
First Settlement, and Indians in here,—'fore we
driv 'em out.—

XLVIII

And Plutarch's Lives—and life also o' Dan'el
Boone, and this-
Here Mungo Park, and Adam Poe—jes' all the *lives*
they is!
And Doc's got all the *novels* out,—by Scott and
Dickison
And Cooper.—And, I make no doubt, he's read 'em
ever' one!

XLIX

Onc't, in his office, settin' there, with crowd o' eight
er nine
Old neighbers with the time to spare, and Doc
a-feelin' fine,
A man rid up from Rollins, jes' fer Doc to write
him out
Some blame' p'scription—done, I guess, in minute,
nigh about.—

L

And *I* says, "Doc, you 'pear so spry, jes' write me
that recei't
You have fer bein' *happy* by,—fer that 'ud shorely
beat
Your *medicine!*" says I.—And quick as *s'cat!* Doc
turned and writ
And handed me: "Go he'p the sick, and putt your
heart in it."

LI

And then, "A-talkin' furder 'bout that line o' thought," says he,
"Ef we'll jes' do the work cut out and give' to you and me,
We'll lack no joy, ner appetite, ner all we'd ort to eat,
And sleep like childern ever' night—as puore and ca'm and sweet."

LII

Doc *has* bin 'cused o' *offishness* and lack o' talkin' free
And extry friendly; but he says, "I'm *'feard* o' talk," says he,—
"I've got," he says, "a natchurl turn fer talkin' fit to kill.—
The best and hardest thing to learn is trick o' keepin' still."

LIII

Doc *kin* smoke, and I s'pose he *might* drink licker—jes' fer fun.
He says, "*You* smoke, *you* drink all right; but *I* don't—neether one"—
Says, "I *like* whisky—'good old rye'—but like it in its place,
Like that-air warter in your eye, er nose there on your face."

LIV

Doc's bound to have his joke! The day he got that
off on me
I jes' had sold a load o' hay at "Scofield's Livery,"
And tolled Doc in the shed they kep' the hears't in,
where I'd hid
The stuff 'at got me "out o' step," as Sifers said
it did.

LV

Doc hain't, to say, no *"rollin' stone,"* and yit he
hain't no hand
Fer *'cumulatin'.—Home's* his own, and scrap o'
farmin'-land—
Enough to keep him out the way when folks is tuk
down sick
The suddentest—'most any day they want him
'special quick.

LVI

And yit Doc loves his practise; ner don't, wilful,
want to slight
No call—no matter who—how fur away—er day er
night.—
He loves his work—he loves his friends—June,
Winter, Fall, and Spring:
His *lovin'*—facts is—never ends; he loves jes'
*ever'*thing. . . .

LVII

'Cept—*keepin' books.* He never sets down no
accounts.—He hates,
The worst of all, collectin' debts—the worst, the
more he waits.—
I've knowed him, when at last he *had* to dun a
man, to end
By makin' him a loan—and mad he hadn't more to
lend.

LVIII

When Pence's Drug Store ust to be in full blast,
they wuz some
Doc's patients got things frekantly there, charged
to *him,* i gum!—
Doc run a bill there, don't you know, and allus when
he squared,
He never questioned nothin',—so he had his feelin's
spared.

LIX

Now sich as that, I hold and claim, hain't *'scusable*
—it's not
Perfessional!—It's jes' a shame 'at Doc hisse'f
hain't got
No better *business*-sense! That's why lots 'd respect
him more,
And not give him the clean go-by fer *other* doctors.
Shore!

LX

This-here Doc *Glenn,* fer instance; er this little
jack-leg *Hall;*—
They're *business*—folks respects 'em fer their
business more'n all
They ever knowed, er ever *will,* 'bout *medicine.*—
Yit they
Collect their money, k-yore er kill.—They're
business, anyway!

LXI

You ast Jake Dunn;—he's worked it out in
figgers.—He kin show
Stastistics how Doc's airnt about *three* fortunes in
a row,—
Ever' ten-year' hand-runnin' straight—*three* of 'em
—*thirty* year'
'At Jake kin count and 'lucidate o' Sifer's practise
here.

LXII

Yit—"Praise the Lord," says Doc, "we've got our
little home!" says he—
"(It's railly *Winniferd's,* but what she owns, she
sheers with me.)
We' got our little gyarden-spot, and peach and
apple trees,
And stable, too, and chicken-lot, and eighteen hive'
o' bees."

LXIII

You call it anything you please, but it's *witchcraft*
—the power
'At Sifers has o' handlin' bees!—He'll watch 'em
by the hour—
Mix right amongst 'em, mad and hot and swarmin'!
—yit they won't
Sting *him,* er *want* to—*'pear* to not,—at least I
know they *don't.*

LXIV

With *me* and bees they's no *p'tense* o' socialbility—
A dad-burn bee 'ud climb a fence to git a whack
at *me!*
I s'pose no thing 'at's *got* a sting is railly satisfied
It's *sharp* enough, ontel, i jing! he's honed it on
my hide!

LXV

And Doc he's allus had a knack *inventin'* things.—
Dee-vised
A windlass wound its own se'f back as it run down:
and s'prised
Their new hired girl with *clothes-line,* too, and
clothes-pins, all in *one:*
Purt' nigh all left fer *her* to do wuz git her
primpin' done!

LXVI

And onc't, I mind, in airly Spring, and tappin' sugar trees,
Doc made a dad-burn little thing to sharpen *spiles* with—these-
Here wood'-spouts 'at the peth's punched out, and driv' in where they bore
The auger-holes. He sharpened 'bout *a million* spiles er more!

LXVII

And Doc's the first man ever swung a *bucket* on a tree
Instid o' *troughs;* and first man brung *grained* sugar—so's 'at he
Could use it fer his coffee, and fer cookin', don't you know.—
Folks come clean up from Pleasantland 'fore they'd *believe* it, though!

LXVIII

And all Doc's stable-doors *on*locks and locks *theirse'ves*—and gates
The same way;—all rigged up like clocks, with pulleys, wheels, and weights,—
So, 's Doc says, "Drivin' *out,* er *in,* they'll *open;* and they'll *then,*
All quiet-like, shet up ag'in like little gentlemen!"

LXIX

And Doc 'ud made a mighty good *detective.*—
Neighbers all
Will testify to *that*—er *could,* ef they wuz legal call:
His theories on any crime is worth your listenin'
to.—
And he has hit 'em, many a time, long 'fore
established true.

LXX

At this young druggist Wenfield Pence's trial fer
his life,
On *primy faishy* evidence o' pizonin' his wife,
Doc's testimony saved and cle'red and 'quitted him
and freed
Him so's he never even 'peared cog-*niz*ant of the
deed!

LXXI

The facts wuz—Sifers testified,—at inquest he had
found
The stummick showed the woman *died* o' pizon, but
had downed
The dos't *herse'f,*—because *amount* and *cost* o'
drug imployed
No *druggist* would, on *no* account, 'a' lavished and
distroyed!

LXXII

Doc tracked a blame-don burglar down, and *nailed*
the scamp, to boot,
But told him ef he'd leave the town he wouldn't
prosecute.
He traced him by a tied-up thumb-print in fresh
putty, where
Doc glazed it. Jes' *that's* how he come to track him
to his lair!

LXXIII

Doc's jes' a *leetle* too inclined, *some* thinks, to
overlook
The criminal and vicious kind we'd ort to bring to
book
And punish, 'thout no extry show o' *sympathizin'*,
where
They hain't showed none fer *us,* you know. But he
takes issue there:

LXXIV

Doc argies 'at "The Red-eyed Law," as *he* says,
"ort to learn
To lay a mighty leenient paw on deeds o' sich
concern
As only the Good Bein' knows the wherefore of,
and spreads
His hands above accused and sows His mercies on
their heads."

LXXV

Doc even holds 'at *murder* hain't no crime we got a right
To *hang* a man fer—claims it's *taint* o' *lunacy,* er *quite.*—
"Hold *sich* a man responsibul fer murder," Doc says,—"then,
When *he's* hung, where's the rope to pull them *sound-mind* jurymen?

LXXVI

"It's in a nutshell—*all* kin see," says Doc,—"it's cle'r the *Law's*
As ap' to err as you er me, and kill without a cause:
The man most innocent o' sin *I've* saw, er *'spect* to see,
Wuz servin' a life-sentence in the penitentchury."

LXXVII

And Doc's a whole hand at a *fire!*—directin' how and where
To set your ladders, low er higher, and what first duties air,—
Like formin' warter-bucket-line; and best man in the town
To chop holes in old roofs, and mine defective chimblies down:

LXXVIII

Er durin' any public crowd, mass-meetin', er big day,
Where ladies ortn't be allowed, as I've heerd Sifers say,—
When they's a suddent rush somewhere, it's Doc's voice, ca'm and cle'r,
Says, "Fall back, men, and give her air!—that's all she's faintin' fer."

LXXIX

The sorriest I ever feel fer Doc is when some show
Er circus comes to town and he'll not git a chance to go.
'Cause he jes' natchurly *de*lights in circuses—clean down
From tumblers, in their spangled tights, to trick-mule and Old Clown.

LXXX

And ever'body *knows* it, too, how Doc is, thataway! . . .
I mind a circus onc't come through—wuz there myse'f that day.—
Ring-master cracked his whip, you know, to start the ridin'—when
In runs Old Clown and hollers *"Whoa!*—Ladies and gentlemen

LXXXI

"Of this vast audience, I fain would make
inquiry cle'r,
And learn, find out, and ascertain—*Is Doctor Sifers
here?*"
And when some fool-voice bellers down: "He is!
He's settin' in
Full view o' ye!" *"Then,"* says the Clown, *"the
circus may begin!"*

LXXXII

Doc's got a *temper;* but, he says, he's learnt it
which is boss,
Yit has to *watch* it, more er less. . . . I never seen
him cross
But onc't, enough to make him swear;—milch-cow
stepped on his toe,
And Doc ripped out *"I doggies!"*—There's the
only case I know.

LXXXIII

Doc says that's what your temper's fer—to hold
back out o' view,
And learn it never to occur on out ahead o' *you.*—
"*You* lead the way," says Sifers—"git your *temper*
back in line—
And *furdest* back the *best,* ef it's as mean a one as
mine!"

LXXXIV

He hates contentions—can't abide a wrangle er
dispute
O' any kind; and he 'ull slide out of a crowd and
skoot
Up some back-alley 'fore he'll stand and listen to a
furse
When ary one's got upper-hand and t'other one's
got worse.

LXXXV

Doc says: "I 'spise, when pore and weak and
awk'ard talkers fails,
To see it's them with hardest cheek and loudest
mouth pervails.—
A' all-one-sided quarr'l 'll make me *biassed,* mighty
near,—
'Cause ginerly the side I take's the one I never
hear."

LXXXVI

What 'peals to Doc the most and best is "seein'
folks *agreed,*
And takin' ekal interest and universal heed
O' ever'body *else's* words and idies—same as we
Wuz glad and chirpy as the birds—jes' as we'd
ort to be!"

LXXXVII

And *paterotic!* Like to git Doc started, full and fair,
About the war, and why 't'uz fit, and what wuz
'complished there;
"And who wuz *wrong,*" says Doc, "er *right,* 't'uz
waste o' blood and tears,
All prophesied in *Black* and *White* fer years and
years and years!"

LXXXVIII

And then he'll likely kind o' tetch on old John
Brown, and dwell
On what *his* warnin's wuz; and ketch his breath and
cough, and tell
On down to Lincoln's death. And *then*—well, he
jes' chokes and quits
With "I must go now, gentlemen!" and grabs his
hat, and *gits!*

LXXXIX

Doc's own war-rickord wuzn't won so much in line
o' fight
As line o' work and nussin' done the wownded, day
and night.—
His wuz the hand, through dark and dawn, 'at
bound their wownds, and laid
As soft as their own mother's on their forreds when
they prayed. . . .

XC

His wuz the face they saw the first—all dim, but smilin' bright,
As they come to and knowed the worst, yit saw the old *Red-White-*
And-Blue where Doc had fixed it where they'd see it *wavin'* still,
Out through the open tent-flap there, er 'crost the winder-sill.

XCI

And some's a-limpin' round here yit—a-waitin' Last Review,—
'Ud give the pensions 'at they git, and pawn their crutches, too,
To he'p Doc out, ef he wuz pressed financial'—same as he
Has *allus* he'pped them when distressed—ner never tuk a fee.

XCII

Doc never wuz much hand to pay attention to *p'tense*
And fuss-and-feathers and display in men o' prominence:
"A railly *great* man," Sifers 'lows, "is not the out'ard dressed—
All uniform, salutes and bows, and swellin' out his chest.

XCIII

"I *met* a great man onc't," Doc says, "and shuk his hand," says he,
"And *he* come 'bout in *one,* I guess, o' disapp'intin' *me—*
He talked so common-like, and brought his mind so cle'r in view
And simple-like, I purt' nigh thought, *'I'm* best man o' the two!' "

XCIV

Yes-*sir!* Doc's got convictions and old-fashioned kind o' ways
And idies 'bout this glorious Land o' Freedom; and he'll raise
His hat clean off, no matter where, jes' ever' time he sees
The Stars and Stripes a-floatin' there and flappin' in the breeze.

XCV

And tunes like old "Red-White-and-Blue" 'll fairly drive him wild,
Played on the brass band, marchin' through the streets! Jes' like a child
I've saw that man, his smile jes' set, all kind o' pale and white,
Bareheaded, and his eyes all wet, yit dancin' with delight!

XCVI

And yit, that very man we see all trimbly, pale and
wann,
Give him a case o' *surgery,* we'll see another man!—
We'll do the trimblin' then, and *we'll* git white
around the gills—
He'll show us *nerve* o' nerves, and he 'ull show us
skill o' skills!

XCVII

Then you could toot your horns and beat your
drums and bang your guns,
And wave your flags and march the street, and
charge, all Freedom's sons!—
And Sifers *then,* I bet my hat, 'ud never flinch a
hair,
But, stiddy-handed, 'tend to that pore patient layin'
there.

XCVIII

And Sifers' *eye's* as stiddy as that hand o' his!—
He'll shoot
A' old-style rifle, like he has, and smallest bore, to
boot,
With any fancy rifles made to-day, er expert shot
'At works at shootin' like a *trade*—and all *some* of
'em's got!

XCIX

Let 'em go right out in the *woods* with Doc, and leave their "traps"
And blame' glass-balls and queensware-goods, and see how Sifers draps
A squirrel out the tallest tree.—And 'fore he fires he'll say
Jes' where he'll hit him—yes, sir-*ee!* And he's hit thataway!

C

Let 'em go out with him, i jucks! with fishin'-pole and gun,—
And ekal chances, fish and ducks, and take the *rain,* er *sun,*
Jes' as it pours, er as it blinds the eyesight; *then* I guess
'At they'd acknowledge, in their minds, their disadvantages.

CI

And yit *he'd* be the last man out to flop his wings and crow
Insultin'-like, and strut about above his fallen foe!—
No-*sir!* the hand 'at tuk the wind out o' their sails 'ud be
The very first they grabbed, and grinned to feel sich sympathy.

CII

Doc gits off now and then and takes a huntin'-trip somewhere
'Bout Kankakee, up 'mongst the lakes—sometimes'll drift round there
In his canoe a week er two; then paddle clean on back
By way o' old Wabash and Blue, with fish—all he kin pack,—

CIII

And wild ducks—some with feathers on 'em yit, and stuffed with grass.
And neighbers—all knows he's bin *gone*—comes round and gits a bass—
A great big double-breasted "rock," er "black," er maybe *pair*
Half fills a' ordinary crock. . . . Doc's *fish*'ll give out there

CIV

Long 'fore his *ducks!*—But folks'll smile and blandish him, and make
Him tell and *tell* things!—all the while enjoy 'em jes' fer sake
O' pleasin' *him;* and then turn in and la'nch him from the start
A-tellin' all the things ag'in they railly know by heart.

CV

He's jes' a *child,* 's what Sifers is! And-sir, I'd
ruther see
That happy, childish face o' his, and puore
simplicity,
Than any shape er style er plan o' mortals
otherwise—
With perfect faith in God and man a-shinin' in his
eyes.

TAMÁM

WHERE THE CHILDREN USED TO PLAY

THE old farm-home is Mother's yet and mine,
And filled it is with plenty and to spare,—
But we are lonely here in life's decline,
Though fortune smiles around us everywhere:
We look across the gold
Of the harvests, as of old—
The corn, the fragrant clover, and the hay;
But most we turn our gaze,
As with eyes of other days,
To the orchard where the children used to play.

O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
To the orchard where the children used to play.

Our sloping pasture-lands are filled with herds;
The barn and granary-bins are bulging o'er;
The grove's a paradise of singing birds—
The woodland brook leaps laughing by the door;
Yet lonely, lonely still,
Let us prosper as we will,

1893

Our old hearts seem so empty every way—
We can only through a mist
See the faces we have kissed
In the orchard where the children used to play.

O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
To the orchard where the children used to play.

MR. FOLEY'S CHRISTMAS

There's nothing sweet in the city
But the patient lives of the poor.
—John Boyle O'Reilly

I

SINCE pick av them I'm sore denied
'Twixt play or work, I say,
Though it be Christmas, I decide
I'll work whilst others play:
I'll whustle, too, wid Christmas pride
To airn me extry pay.—
It's like the job's more glorified
That's done a-holiday!

Dan, dip a coal in dad's pipe-bowl;
Kate, pass me dinner-can:
Och! Mary woman, save yer sowl,
Ye've kissed a workin'-man—
Ye have, this Christmas mornin',
Ye've kissed a workin'-man!

1895

II

Whisht, Kate an' Dan!—ten thousan' grates
  There's yon where ne'er a charm
Av childer-faces sanctuates
  The city-homes from harm:
It's cold out there the weather waits
  An' bitter whirls the storm,
But, faith! these arms av little Kate's
  'Ll kape her fayther warm!

Ay, Danny, tight me belt a mite,—
  Kate, aisy wid the can!—
Sure, I'd be comin' home to-night
  A hungry workin'-man—
D'ye moind, this Christmas avenin'—
  A howlin'-hungry man!

III

It's sorry for the boss I be,
  Wid new conthracts to sign
An' hire a sub to oversee
  Whilst he lave off an' dine:
It's sorry for the Company
  That owns the Aarie Line—
What vasht raasponshibility
  They have, compared wid mine!

There, Katy! git me t'other mitt,
  An' fetch me yon from Dan—
(Wid aich one's "Christmas" hid in it!)
  Lave go me dinner-can!—
Ye'll have me docked this mornin'—
This blessed Christmas mornin',—
  A dishgraced workin'-man!

TO SANTA CLAUS

MOST tangible of all the gods that be,
O Santa Claus—our own since Infancy!—
As first we scampered to thee—now, as then,
Take us as children to thy heart again.

Be wholly good to us, just as of old;
As a pleased father, let thine arms infold
Us, homed within the haven of thy love,
And all the cheer and wholesomeness thereof.

Thou lone reality, when O so long
Life's unrealities have wrought us wrong:
Ambition hath allured us,—fame likewise,
And all that promised honor in men's eyes.

Throughout the world's evasions, wiles, and
shifts,
Thou only bidest stable as thy gifts:—
A grateful king re-ruleth from thy lap,
Crowned with a little tinseled soldier-cap:

A mighty general—a nation's pride—
Thou givest again a rocking-horse to ride,
And wildly glad he groweth as the grim
Old jurist with the drum thou givest him:

1898

The sculptor's chisel, at thy mirth's command,
Is as a whistle in his boyish hand;
The painter's model fadeth utterly,
And there thou standest,—and he painteth
thee:—

Most like a winter pippin, sound and fine
And tingling-red that ripe old face of thine,
Set in thy frosty beard of cheek and chin
As midst the snows the thaws of spring set in.

Ho! Santa Claus—our own since Infancy—
Most tangible of all the gods that be!—
As first we scampered to thee—now, as then,
Take us as children to thy heart again.

CHRISTMAS ALONG THE WIRES

Scene—Hoosier railway station, Washout Glen

Night—Interior of Telegraph Office—Single operator's table in some disorder—lunch-basket, litter of books and sheet-music—a flute and a guitar—Rather good-looking young man, evidently in charge, talking to commercial traveler.

JUNCTION-Station—Pilot Knob—
Say "the operator there
Is a *girl*—with auburn hair
And blue eyes, and purty, too,
As they make 'em!"—That'll do!—
They *all* know her 'long the Line—
Railroad men, from President
Of the road to section-hand!—
And she knows *us*—the whole mob
Of us *lightnin'-slingers*—Shoo!—
Brownie's got us all down fine!
Though she's *business,* understand,
Brownie she just beats the band!
Brownie she's held up that job
Five or six years anyhow—
Since her *father's* death, when all

The whole road decided now
Was no time for nothin' small,—
It was *Brownie's* job! Since ten
Years of age she'd been with *him*
In the office. Now, I guess,
She was sixteen, more or less—
Just a girl, but strong and trim,
And as independent, too,
And *reliable* clean through
As the old man when he died
Two mile' up the track beside
His red-light, one icy night
When the line broke down—and yet
He got there in time, you bet,
To shut off a wreck all right!
Yes, *some* life here, and romance—
Pilot Knob, though, and Roachdale,
And this little eight-by-ten
Dinky town of Washout Glen
Have to pool inhabitants
Even for enough young men
To fill out a country dance,—
All chip in on some joint-date,
And whack up and pony down
And *combine* and celebrate,—
Say, on Decoration Day—
Fourth o' July—Easter, or
Circus-Day, or *Christmas,* say—
All *three* towns, and right-o'-way
Fer two extrys,—one from here—
One down from the Knob. Well, then

Roachdale is herself again!
Like *last* Christmas, when all three
Towns collogued, and far and near
Billed things for a Christmas-Tree
At old Roachdale. Now mark here:—
I had leave, last Holidays,
And was goin' home, you see,
Two weeks—and the Company
Sent a man to fill my place—
An old *chum* of mine, in fact,
I'd been coaxin' to arrange
Just to have his dressin'-case
And his latest music packed
And come on here for a change.
He'd been here to visit me
Once before—in *summer then,*—
Come to stay "just two or three
Days," he said—and he stayed *ten.*
When he left here *then*—Well, he
Was clean gone on Brownie—wild
And plum silly as a child!
Name—MacClintock. Most young men
Stood 'way back when Mac was round.
Fact is, he was *fine,* you know—
Silver-tenor voice that went
Up among the stars, and sent
The girls back to higher-tone'
Dreams than they had ever known!
A good-looker—stylish—slim—
And wore clothes that no man downed—
Yes, and smoked a good cigar

And smelt right; and used to blow
A smooth flute—And a *guitar*
No man heard till he heard *him!*—
Say, some midnight serenade—
Oomh! how drippin'-sweet he played!
Boys, though, wasn't stuck on Mac
So blame' much,—especially
Roachdale operator.—He
Kind o' had the inside-track
On *all* of us, as to who
Got most talk from Brownie, when
She had nothin' else to do
But to buzz us now and then
Up and down the wires, you know;
And we'd jolly back again
'Bout some dance—and "Would she go
With *us* or her *Roachdale* beau?"
(Boys all called him "Roachy"—see?)—
Wire her, "Was she 'Happy now'?"
And "How's 'Roachy,' anyhow?"
Or, "Say, Brownie, who's the jay
You was stringin' yesterday?"
And I've sat here when this key
Shot me like a battery,
Just 'cause Brownie wired to say
That "That box o' fruit, or flowers,
That 'I'd' sent her came O. K.,—
To beguile the weary hours
Till we met again!"—Then break
Short off—for the Roachdale cuss
Callin' her, and on to us.

'Course *he'd* sent 'em—no mistake!
Lord, she kept that man awake!
Yet he kept *her* fooled: His cheek
And pure goody-goody gall
Hid from *her*—if not from all—
A quite vivid *"yellow streak."*—
Awful' jealous, don't you see?—
Felt he had a *right* to be,
Maybe, bein' *engaged.*—And they
Were engaged—that's straight.—"G A!"*—
Well: MacClintock when *he* come
Down from York to take this job,
And stopped off at Pilot Knob
For "instructions," there was some
Indications of unrest
At *Roachdale* right from the start,—
"Roachy" wasn't *awful'* smart,
Maybe, but he done his best—
With such brains as he possessed.—
Anyway he made *one* play
That was brilliant—of its kind—
And *maintained* it.—From the day
That MacClintock took my key
And I left on Number Three,
"Roachy" opened up on Mac
And just *loved* him!—purred and whined
'Cross the wires how tickled he
Was to hear that *Mac* was back,
And how glad the *girls* would be
And the young-folks everywhere,

* Telegraphers' abbreviation for "Go ahead,"

As he'd reason to believe,—
And how, even *then,* they were
"Shapin' things at old Roachdale
For a blow-out, Christmas-eve,
That would turn all others pale!—
First a *Christmas-Tree,* at old
Armory Hall, and then the floor
Cleared, and—"
"Come in out the cold!"
Breaks MacClintock—"Don't I know?—
Dancin', say, from ten till four—
Maybe *daylight* 'fore we go!—
With Ben Custer's Band to pour
Music out in swirlin' rills
And back-tides o' waltz-quadrilles
Level with the window-sills!—
Roachy, you're a *bird!*—But, say,—
How am I to get away
From the office here?"
Well, then
"Roachy" wires him back again:—
"That's O. K.,—I call a *man*
Up from *Dunkirk;* got it all
Fixed.—So Christmas-eve, you can
Collar the seven-thirty train
For Roachdale—the same that *he*
Comes on.—Leave your office-key
In the door: he'll do the rest."
Then "old Roachy" rattled through
A long list of who'd be there,—
Boys and girls that Mac knew best—

One name, though, that had no bare
Little mention anywhere!
Then he shut off, as he said,
For his supper. . . . About ten
Minutes *Mac* was *called again*—
With a click that flushed him red
As the signal-flag—and then
Came like music in the air—
"Yes, and *Brownie* will be there!"

Folks tell *me,* that Christmas-Tree,
Dance and whole blame' jamboree,
Looked like it was goin' to be
A blood-curdlin' tragedy.
People 'long the *roads,* you know—
Well, they've had experience
With all sorts of *accidents,*
And they've learnt *some* things,—and so
When an accident or wreck
Happens, they know *some man's "break"*
Is responsible, and hence—
Well—they want to *break* his *neck!*
So it happened, Christmas-eve,
At *Roachdale,*—MacClintock there
Cocked back in the barber-chair
At eight-forty, and no train
Down yet from the Knob, and it
Due at eight-ten sharp. The strain
Was a-showin' quite a bit

On the general crowd; and when
Purty soon the rumor spread—
Wreck had probably occurred—
Some one said somebody said
That he'd heard somebody say,
"*Operator* at the *Glen*
Was to blame for the delay—
Fact is, he had run away
From his office—Even then
Was in *Roachdale*—there to be
Present at the Christmas-Tree
And the 'shindig' afterward,
Wreck or *no* wreck!" . . . *Mac* sat up,
Whiter than the shavin'-cup. . . .
Back of *his* face in the glass
He stared into he could see
A big crowd there—and, alas!
Not in all that threatening throng
One friend's face of sympathy—
One friend knowin' right from wrong!
He got on his feet—erect—
Nervy;—faced the crowd, and then
Said: "*I* am MacClintock from
The Glen-office, and I've come
To your Christmas festival
By request of one that all
Of you honor, gentlemen,—
Your most trusted citizen—
Your own operator here
At the station-office—where
He'll acquit *me* of neglect,

And will make it plain and clear
Who the sub. is he sent there
To my office at the Glen—
Or, if *not* one there,—who then
Is indeed the criminal? . . .
I am going now to call
On him.—Join me, gentlemen—
I insist you come with me."
Well, a sense of some respect
Caught 'em,—and they followed, all,
Silently, though sullenly.

Fortunately, half a square
Brought 'em to the station and
The crowd there that packed the small
Waiting-room on every hand,
With a kind o' general stand
Round the half-door window through
Which "old Roachy," in full view,
Sat there, smilin' in a sick
Sort o' way, yet gloryin', too,
In the work he had to do.
Mac worked closer, breathin' quick
At the muttered talk of some
Of the toughest of the crowd;
Till, above the growl and hum
Of the ominous voices, he
Heard the click of "Roachy's" key,—
And his heart beat 'most out 'loud
As he heard him wirin':—"Yes,
Trouble down at *Glen,* I guess.

Glen's fool-operator *here*—
What's-his-name?—MacClintock.—Fear
Mob will hang him.—Mob knows he
Left his office.—And no doubt
Wreck there on account of it.
People worked-up here—and shout
Now and then to 'Take him out!'—
'Hang him!'—and so forth." . . . Mac lit
Through the half-door window at
"Roachy's" table like a cat:—
He was *white,* but *"Roachy's"* face
Made a brunette out o' *his!* . . .
Mac had pinned him in his chair
Helpless—and a message there
Clickin' back from Pilot Knob.—
"Tell these people, word-for-word,"
Mac says, "what this message is!—
"Tell 'em.—Hear me?" "Roachy" heard
And obeyed:—" 'We sized your job
On MacClintock.—*Knob* here sent
A sub. there.—And all O. K.
At Glen-office.—Tie-up *here*—
One hour's wait—all fault of *mine.*
"Hang MacClintock," did you say?
"Hang MacClintock?"—Certainly,—
Hang him on the Christmas-Tree,
With a label on for *me,*—
I'll be there on Number Nine.' "

TO THE BOY WITH A COUNTRY

DAN WALLINGFORD

DAN WALLINGFORD, my jo Dan!—
Though but a child in years,
Your patriot spirit thrills the land
And wakens it to cheers,—
You lift the flag—you roll the drums—
We hear the bugle blow,—
Till all our hearts are one with yours,
Dan Wallingford, my jo!

1910

AT CROWN HILL

LEAVE him here in the fresh greening grasses
and trees
And the symbols of love, and the solace of these—
The saintly white lilies and blossoms he keeps
In endless caress as he breathlessly sleeps.
The tears of our eyes wrong the scene of his rest,
For the sky's at its clearest—the sun's at its best—
The earth at its greenest—its wild bud-and-bloom
At its sweetest—and sweetest its honey'd perfume.
Home! home!—Leave him here in his lordly
estate,
And with never a tear as we turn from the gate!

Turn back to the home that will know him no
more,—
The vines at the window—the sun through the
door.—
Nor sound of his voice, nor the light of his
face! . . .
But the birds will sing on, and the rose, in his place,
Will tenderly smile till we daringly feign
He is home with us still, though the tremulous rain

1911

Of our tears reappear, and again all is bloom,
And all prayerless we sob in the long-darkened
room.
Heaven portions it thus—the old mystery dim,—
It is midnight to us—it is morning to him.

SNOW IN THE AIR

SNOW is in the air—
  Chill in blood and vein,—
Winter everywhere
  Save in heart and brain!
Ho! the happy year will be
  Mimic as we've found it,—
Head of it—and you, and me—
  With the holly round it!

Frost and sleet, alack!—
  Wind as bleak as wrath
Whips our faces back
  As we foot the path;—
But the year—from there to here—
  Copy as we've found it,—
Heart up—like the head, my dear,
  With the holly round it!

1913

THE NAME OF OLD GLORY

1898

I

OLD Glory! say, who,
By the ships and the crew,
And the long, blended ranks of the gray and the blue,—
Who gave you, Old Glory, the name that you bear
With such pride everywhere
As you cast yourself free to the rapturous air
And leap out full-length, as we're wanting you to?—
Who gave you that name, with the ring of the same,
And the honor and fame so becoming to you?—
Your stripes stroked in ripples of white and of red,
With your stars at their glittering best overhead—
By day or by night
Their delightfulest light
Laughing down from their little square heaven of blue!—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?—say, who—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?

The old banner lifted, and faltering then
In vague lisps and whispers fell silent again.

1914

II

Old Glory,—speak out!—we are asking about
How you happened to "favor" a name, so to say,
That sounds so familiar and careless and gay
As we cheer it and shout in our wild breezy way—
We—the *crowd,* every man of us, calling you that—
We—Tom, Dick, and Harry—each swinging his hat
And hurrahing "Old Glory!" like you were our kin,
When—*Lord!*—we all know we're as common as
sin!
And yet it just seems like you *humor* us all
And waft us your thanks, as we hail you and fall
Into line, with you over us, waving us on
Where our glorified, sanctified betters have gone.—
And this is the reason we're wanting to know—
(And we're wanting it *so!*—
Where our own fathers went we are willing to
go.)—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory—Oho!—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?

The old flag unfurled with a billowy thrill
For an instant, then wistfully sighed and was still.

III

Old Glory: the story we're wanting to hear
Is what the plain facts of your christening were,—
For your name—just to hear it,
Repeat it, and cheer it, 's a tang to the spirit

As salt as a tear;—
And seeing you fly, and the boys marching by,
There's a shout in the throat and a blur in the eye
And an aching to live for you always—or die,
If, dying, we still keep you waving on high.
And so, by our love
For you, floating above,
And the scars of all wars and the sorrows thereof,
Who gave you the name of Old Glory, and why
Are we thrilled at the name of Old Glory?

Then the old banner leaped, like a sail in the blast,
And fluttered an audible answer at last.—

IV

And it spake, with a shake of the voice, and it said:—
By the driven snow-white and the living blood-red
Of my bars, and their heaven of stars overhead—
By the symbol conjoined of them all, skyward cast,
As I float from the steeple, or flap at the mast,
Or droop o'er the sod where the long grasses nod,—
My name is as old as the glory of God.
. . . So I came by the name of Old Glory.

ONE WITH A SONG

FRANK L. STANTON

HE sings: and his song is heard,
Pure as a joyous prayer,
Because he sings of the simple things—
The fields, and the open air,
The orchard-bough, and the mocking-bird,
And the blossoms everywhere.

He sings of a wealth we hold
In common ownership—
The wildwood nook, and the laugh of the brook,
And the dewdrop's drip and drip,
The love of the lily's heart of gold,
And the kiss of the rose's lip.

The universal heart
Leans listening to his lay
That glints and gleams with the glimmering dreams
Of children at their play—
A lay as rich with unconscious art
As the first song-bird's of May.

1917

Ours every rapturous tone
  Of every song of glee,
Because his voice makes native choice
  Of Nature's harmony—
So that his singing seems our own,
  And ours his ecstasy.

Steadfastly, bravely glad
  Above all earthly stress,
He lifts his line to heights divine,
  And, singing, ever says,—
This is a better world than bad—
  God's love is limitless.

He sings: and his song is heard,
  Pure as a joyous prayer,
Because he sings of the simple things—
  The fields, and the open air,
The orchard-bough, and the mocking-bird,
  And the blossoms everywhere.

INDIANA

OUR Land—our Home!—the common home
indeed
Of soil-born children and adopted ones—
The stately daughters and the stalwart sons
Of Industry:—All greeting and godspeed!
O home to proudly live for, and, if need
Be, proudly die for, with the roar of guns
Blent with our latest prayer.—So died men
once. . . .
Lo, Peace! . . . As we look on the land THEY
freed—
Its harvests all in ocean-overflow
Poured round autumnal coasts in billowy gold—
Its corn and wine and balmèd fruits and
flow'rs,—
We know the exaltation that they know
Who now, steadfast inheritors, behold
The Land Elysian, marveling "This is ours!"

1919

CHRISTMAS AFTERTHOUGHT

AFTER a thoughtful, almost painful pause,
Bub sighed, "I'm sorry fer old *Santy Claus:*—
They *wuz* no Santy Claus, ner *couldn't* be,
When *he* wuz ist a little boy like me!"

1920

THE CHRISTMAS LONG AGO

COME, sing a hale Heigh-ho
For the Christmas long ago!—
When the old log-cabin homed us
From the night of blinding snow,
Where the rarest joy held reign,
And the chimney roared amain,
With the firelight like a beacon
Through the frosty window-pane.

Ah! the revel and the din
From without and from within,
The blend of distant sleigh-bells
With the plinking violin;
The muffled shrieks and cries—
Then the glowing cheeks and eyes—
The driving storm of greetings,
Gusts of kisses and surprise.

1921

EXCEEDING ALL

LONG life's a lovely thing to know,
With lovely health and wealth, forsooth,
And lovely name and fame—But O
The loveliness of Youth!

1922

CLAUDE MATTHEWS

STEADFASTLY from his childhood's earliest hour—
From simplest country life to state and power—
His worth has known advancement,—each new height
A newer glory in his fellow's sight.

So yet his happy fate—though mute the breath
Of thronging multitudes and thundrous cheers,—
Faith sees him raised still higher, through our tears,
By this divine promotion of his death.

1923

THE SERMON OF THE ROSE

WILFUL we are, in our infirmity
Of childish questioning and discontent.
Whate'er befalls us is divinely meant—
Thou Truth the clearer for thy mystery!
Make us to meet what is or is to be
With fervid welcome, knowing it is sent
To serve us in some way full excellent,
Though we discern it all belatedly.
The rose buds, and the rose blooms, and the rose
Bows in the dews, and in its fulness, lo,
Is in the lover's hand,—then on the breast
Of her he loves,—and there dies.—And who knows
What fate of all a rose may undergo
Is fairest, dearest, sweetest, loveliest?

Nay, we are children: we will not mature.
A blessed gift must seem a theft; and tears
Must storm our eyes when but a joy appears
In drear disguise of sorrow; and how poor
We seem when we are richest,—most secure
Against all poverty the lifelong years
We yet must waste in childish doubts and fears
That, in despite of reason, still endure!

1924

Alas! the sermon of the rose we will
  Not wisely ponder; nor the sobs of grief
    Lulled into sighs of rapture, nor the cry
Of fierce defiance that again is still.
  Be patient—patient with our frail belief,
    And stay it yet a little ere we die.

O opulent life of ours, though dispossessed
  Of treasure after treasure! Youth most fair
  Went first, but left its priceless coil of hair—
Moaned over, sleepless nights, kissed and caressed
Through drip and blur of tears the tenderest.
  And next went Love—the ripe rose glowing
      there,
  Her very sister! . . . *It* is here, but where
Is *she,* of all the world the first and best?
And yet how sweet the sweet earth after rain—
  How sweet the sunlight on the garden-wall
    Across the roses—and how sweetly flows
The limpid yodel of the brook again!
  And yet—and yet how sweeter, after all,
    The smoldering sweetness of a dead red rose!

THE ONWARD TRAIL

MYRON W. REED, DENVER, JANUARY 30, 1899

JUST as of old,—with fearless foot
And placid face and resolute,
He takes the faint, mysterious trail
That leads beyond our earthly hail.

We would cry, as in last farewell,
But that his hand waves, and a spell
Is laid upon our tongues: and thus
He takes unworded leave of us.

And it is fitting:—As he fared
Here with us, so is he prepared
For any fortuning the night
May hold for him beyond our sight.

The moon and stars they still attend
His wandering footsteps to the end,—
He did not question, nor will we,
Their guidance and security.

1926

So, never parting word nor cry:—
We feel, with him, that by and by
Our onward trails will meet and then
Merge and be ever one again.

TO LESLEY

BURNS sang of bonny Lesley
As she gaed o'er the border,—
Gaed like vain Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

I sing another Lesley,
Wee girlie, more alluring,
Who stays at home, the wise one,
Her conquests there securing.

A queen, too, is my Lesley,
And gracious, though blood-royal,
My heart her throne, her kingdom,
And I a subject loyal.

Long shall you reign, my Lesley,
My pet, my darling dearie,
For love, oh, little sweetheart,
Grows never old or weary.

1928

THE NATURALIST

OLIVER DAVIE

IN gentlest worship has he bowed
To Nature. Rescued from the crowd
And din of town and thoroughfare,
He turns him from all worldly care
Unto the sacred fastness of
The forests, and the peace and love
That breathes there prayer-like in the breeze
And coo of doves in dreamful trees—
Their tops in laps of sunshine laid,
Their lower boughs all slaked with shade.

With head uncovered has he stood,
Hearing the Spirit of the Wood—
Hearing aright the Master speak
In trill of bird, and warbling creek;
In lisp of reeds, or rainy sigh
Of grasses as the loon darts by—
Hearing aright the storm and lull,
And all earth's voices wonderful,—
Even this hail an unknown friend
Lifts will he hear and comprehend.

1929

HER WAITING FACE

IN some strange place
Of long-lost lands he finds her waiting face—
Comes marveling upon it, unaware,
Set moonwise in the midnight of her hair.

1930

EXCEEDING ALL

LONG life's a lovely thing to know,
With lovely health and wealth, forsooth,
And lovely name and fame—But O
The loveliness of Youth!

1931

A SONG OF THE ROAD

O I will walk with you, my lad, whichever
way you fare,
You'll have me, too, the side o' you, with heart as
light as air;
No care for where the road you take's a-leadin'—
*any*where,—
It can but be a joyful ja'nt the whilst *you* journey
there.
The road you take's the path o' love, an' that's the
bridth o' two—
And I will walk with you, my lad—O I will walk
with you.

Ho! I will walk with you, my lad,
Be weather black or blue
Or roadsides frost or dew, my lad—
O I will walk with you.

Ay, glad, my lad, I'll walk with you, whatever winds
may blow,
Or summer blossoms stay our steps, or blinding
drifts of snow;
The way that you set face and foot's the way that I
will go,

1932

And brave I'll be, abreast o' you, the Saints and
Angels know!
With loyal hand in loyal hand, and one heart made
o' two,
Through summer's gold, or winter's cold, it's I
will walk with you.

Sure, I will walk with you, my lad,
As love ordains me to,—
To Heaven's door, and through, my lad,
O I will walk with you.

THE ENDURING

A MISTY memory—faint, far away
And vague and dim as childhood's long-lost day—
Forever haunts and holds me with a spell
Of awe and wonder indefinable:—
A grimy old engraving tacked upon
A shoe-shop wall.—An ancient temple, drawn
Of crumbling granite, sagging portico,
And gray, forbidding gateway, grim as woe;
And o'er the portal, cut in antique line,
The words—cut likewise in this brain of mine—
"Wouldst have a friend?—Wouldst know what friend is best?
Have GOD thy friend: He passeth all the rest."

Again the old shoemaker pounds and pounds
Resentfully, as the loud laugh resounds
And the coarse jest is bandied round the throng
That smokes about the smoldering stove; and long,
Tempestuous disputes arise, and then—
Even as all like discords—die again;

1934

The while a barefoot boy more gravely heeds
The quaint old picture, and tiptoeing reads
There in the rainy gloom the legend o'er
The lowering portal of the old church door—
"Wouldst have a friend?—Wouldst know what
friend is best?
Have GOD thy friend: He passeth all the rest."

So older—older—older, year by year,
The boy has grown, that now, an old man here,
He seems a part of Allegory, where
He stands before Life as the old print there—
Still awed, and marveling what light must be
Hid by the door that bars Futurity:—
Though, ever clearer than with eyes of youth,
He reads with his *old* eyes—and tears forsooth—
"Wouldst have a friend?—Wouldst know what
friend is best?
Have GOD thy friend: He passeth all the rest."

A HUMBLE SINGER

A MODEST singer, with meek soul and heart,
Sat, yearning that his art
Might but inspire and suffer him to sing
Even the simplest thing.

And as he sang thus humbly, came a Voice:—
"All mankind shall rejoice,
Hearing thy pure and simple melody
Sing on immortally."

1936

THE NOBLEST SERVICE

DR. WYCKLIFFE SMITH, LATE SURGEON 161ST REGIMENT INDIANA VOLUNTEERS, DELPHI, DECEMBER 29, 1899

IF all his mourning friends unselfishly
Might speak, high over grief, in one accord,
What voice of joy were lifted to the Lord
For having lent our need such ministry
As this man's life has ever proved to be!
Yea, even through battle-crash of gun and sword
His steadfast step still found the pathway toward
The noblest service paid Humanity.
O ye to whose rich firesides he has brought
A richer light! O watcher at the door
Of the lone cabin! O kindred! Comrades!—
all!
Since universal good he dreamed and wrought,
Be brave, to pleasure him, as, on before,
He leads us, answering Glory's highest call.

1937

OLD MAN WHISKERY-WHEE-KUM-WHEEZE

OLD Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze
Lives 'way up in the leaves o' trees.
An' wunst I slipped up-stairs to play
In Aunty's room, while she 'uz away;
An' I clumbed up in her cushion-chair
An' ist peeked out o' the winder there;
An' there I saw—wite out in the trees—
Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze!

An' Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze
Would bow an' bow, with the leaves in the breeze,
An' waggle his whiskers an' raggledy hair,
An' bow to me in the winder there!
An' I'd peek out, an' he'd peek in
An' waggle his whiskers an' bow ag'in,
Ist like the leaves 'u'd wave in the breeze—
Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze!

An' Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze,
Seem-like, says to me: "See my bees
A-bringin' my dinner? An' see my cup
O' locus'-blossoms they've plum filled up?"

1938

An' *"Um-yum, honey!"* wuz last he said,
An' waggled his whiskers an' bowed his head;
An' I yells, "Gimme some, won't you, please,
Old Man Whiskery-Whee-Kum-Wheeze?"

LITTLE-GIRL-TWO-LITTLE-GIRLS

I'M twins, I guess, 'cause my Ma say
I'm two little girls. An' one o' me
Is *Good* little girl; an' th' other 'n' she
Is *Bad little girl as she can be!*
An' Ma say so, 'most ever' day.
An' she's the *funniest* Ma! 'Cause when
My Doll won't mind, and I ist cry,
W'y, nen my Ma she sob an' sigh,
An' say, "Dear *Good* little girl, good-by!—
Bad little girl's comed here again!"

Last time 'at Ma act' thataway,
I cried all to myse'f a while
Out on the steps, an' nen I smile,
An' git my Doll all fix' in style,
An' go in where Ma's at, an' say:
"Morning to you, Mommy dear!
Where's that Bad little girl wuz here?
Bad little girl's goned clean away,
An' Good little girl's comed back to stay."

1940

THE PENALTY OF GENIUS

WHEN little 'Pollus Morton he's
A-go' to speak a piece, w'y, nen
The Teacher smiles an' says 'at she's
Most proud, of all her little men
An' women in her school—'cause 'Poll
He allus speaks the best of all.

An' nen she'll pat him on the cheek,
An' hold her finger up at you
Before he speak'; an' *when* he speak'
It's ist some piece *she* learn' him to!
'Cause he's her favor-ite. . . . An' she
Ain't pop'lar as she *ust* to be.

When 'Pollus Morton speaks, w'y, nen
Ist all the other childern knows
They're smart as him an' smart-again!—
Ef they *can't* speak an' got fine clo'es,
Their Parunts loves 'em more'n 'Poll-
Us Morton, Teacher, speech, an' all!

1941

A PARENT REPRIMANDED

SOMETIMES I think 'at Parunts does
Things ist about as bad as *us*—
Wite 'fore our vurry eyes, at that!
Fer one time Pa he scold' my Ma
'Cause he can't find his hat;
An' she ist *cried,* she did! An' I
Says, "Ef you scold my Ma
Ever again an' make her cry,
W'y, you shan't *be* my Pa!"
An' nen he laugh' an' find his hat
Ist wite where Ma she said it's at!

1942

IN FERVENT PRAISE OF PICNICS

PICNICS is fun 'at's purty hard to beat.
I purt' nigh ruther go to them than *eat*.—
I purt' nigh ruther go to them than go
With our Char*lotty* to the Trick-Dog Show!

1943

THE HOME-VOYAGE

GENERAL HENRY W. LAWTON—FELL AT SAN MATEO, DECEMBER 19, 1899. IN STATE, INDIANAPOLIS, FEBRUARY 6, 1900

BEAR with us, O Great Captain, if our pride
Show equal measure with our grief's excess
In greeting you in this your helplessness
To countermand our vanity or hide
Your stern displeasure that we thus had tried
To praise you, knowing praise was your distress:
But this home-coming swells our hearts no less—
Because for love of home you proudly died.
Lo! then, the cable, fathoms 'neath the keel
That shapes your course, is eloquent of you;
The old flag, too, at half-mast overhead—
We doubt not that its gale-kissed ripples feel
A prouder sense of red and white and blue,—
The stars—Ah, God, were *they* interpreted!

In strange lands were your latest honors won—
In strange wilds, with strange dangers all beset;
With rain, like tears, the face of day was wet,
As rang the ambushed foeman's fateful gun:

And as you felt your final duty done,
We feel *that* glory thrills your spirit yet,—
When at the front, in swiftest death, you met
The patriot's doom and best reward in one.
And so the tumult of that island war,
At last, for you, is stilled forevermore—
Its scenes of blood blend white as ocean foam
On your rapt vision as you sight afar
The sails of peace, and from that alien shore
The proud ship bears you on your voyage
home.

Or rough or smooth the wave, or lowering day
Or starlit sky—you hold, by native right,
Your high tranquillity—the silent might
Of the true hero—so you led the way
To victory through stormiest battle-fray,
Because your followers, high above the fight,
Heard your soul's lightest whisper bid them smite
For God and man and space to kneel and pray.
And thus you cross the seas unto your own
Beloved land, convoyed with honors meet,
Saluted as your home's first heritage—
Nor salutation from your State alone,
But *all* the States, gathered in mighty fleet,
Dip colors as you move to anchorage.

TO THE QUIET OBSERVER

ERASMUS WILSON, AFTER HIS LONG SILENCE

DEAR old friend of us all in need
Who know the worth of a friend indeed,
How rejoiced are we all to learn
Of your glad return.

We who have missed your voice so long—
Even as March might miss the song
Of the sugar-bird in the maples when
They're tapped again.

Even as the memory of these
Blended sweets,—the sap of the trees
And the song of the birds, and the old camp too,
We think of you.

Hail to you, then, with welcomes deep
As grateful hearts may laugh or weep!—
You give us not only the bird that sings,
But all good things.

1946

PROEM TO "HOME-FOLKS"

YOU Home-Folks:—Aid your grateful
guest—
Bear with his pondering, wandering ways:
When idlest he is busiest,
Being a dreamer of the days.

Humor his silent, absent moods—
His restless quests along the shores
Of the old creek, wound through the woods,
The haws, papaws, and sycamores:

The side-path home—the back-way past
The old pump and the dipper there;
The afternoon of dreamy June—
The old porch, and the rocking-chair.

Yea, bear with him a little space—
His heart must smolder on a while
Ere yet it flames out in his face
A wholly tearless smile.

OUR BOYHOOD HAUNTS

HO! I'm going back where
We were youngsters.—Meet me there,
Dear old barefoot chum, and we
Will be as we used to be,—
Lawless rangers up and down
The old creek beyond the town—
Little sunburnt gods at play,
Just as in that far-away:—
Water nymphs, all unafraid,
Shall smile at us from the brink
Of the old mill-race and wade
Tow'rd us as we kneeling drink
At the spring our boyhood knew,
Pure and clear as morning-dew:
And, as we are rising there,
Doubly dow'r'd to hear and see,
We shall thus be made aware
Of an eery piping, heard
High above the happy bird
In the hazel: And then we,
Just across the creek, shall see
(Hah! the goaty rascal!) Pan

1948

Hoof it o'er the sloping green,
Mad with his own melody,
Ay, and (bless the beasty man!)
Stamping from the grassy soil
Bruisèd scents of fleur-de-lis,
Boneset, mint, and pennyroyal.

UNCLE SIDNEY'S LOGIC

PA wunst he scold' an' says to me,—
"Don't *play* so much, but try
To *study* more, and nen you'll be
A great man, by an' by."
Nen Uncle Sidney says, "You let
Him *be* a boy an' play.—
The greatest man on earth, I bet,
'Ud trade with him to-day!"

1950

HIS LOVE OF HOME

"AS love of native land," the old man said,
"Er stars and stripes a-wavin' overhead,
Er nearest kith-and-kin, er daily bread,
A Hoosier's love is fer the old homestead."

TO "UNCLE REMUS"

WE love your dear old face and voice—
We're *all* Miss Sally's Little Boys,
Climbin' your knee,
In ecstasy,
Rejoicin' in your Creeturs' joys
And trickery.

The Lord who made the day and night,
He made the Black man and the White;
So, in like view,
We hold it true
That He hain't got no favor*ite*—
Onless it's you.

1952

THE BALLADE OF THE COMING RAIN

WHEN the morning swoons in its highest heat,
And the sunshine dims, and no dark shade
Streaks the dust of the dazzling street,
And the long straw splits in the lemonade;
When the circus lags in a sad parade,
And the drum throbs dull as a pulse of pain,
And the breezeless flags hang limp and frayed—
O then is the time to look for rain.

When the man on the watering-cart bumps by,
Trilling the air of an old fife-tune,
With a dull, soiled smile, and one shut eye,
Lost in a dream of the afternoon;
When the awning sags like a lank balloon,
And a thick sweat stands on the window-pane,
And a five-cent fan is a priceless boon—
O then is the time to look for rain.

When the goldfish tank is a grimy gray,
And the dummy stands at the clothing-store
With a cap pulled on in a rakish way,
And a rubber-coat with the 'hind before;
When the man in the barber chair flops o'er
And the chin he wags has a telltale stain,
And the bootblack lurks at the open door—
O then is the time to look for rain.

1953

TO THE JUDGE

A VOICE FROM THE INTERIOR OF OLD HOOP-POLE TOWNSHIP

FRIEND of my earliest youth,
Can't you arrange to come down
And visit a fellow out here in the woods—
Out of the dust of the town?
Can't you forget you're a Judge
And put by your dolorous frown
And tan your wan face in the smile of a friend—
Can't you arrange to come down?

Can't you forget for a while
The arguments prosy and drear,—
To lean at full-length in indefinite rest
In the lap of the greenery here?
Can't you kick over "the Bench,"
And "husk" yourself out of your gown
To dangle your legs where the fishing is good—
Can't you arrange to come down?

Bah! for your office of State!
And bah! for its technical lore!
What does our President, high in his chair,
But wish himself low as before!

1954

Pick between peasant and king,—
  Poke your bald head through a crown
Or shadow it here with the laurels of Spring!—
  Can't you arrange to come down?

"Judge it" out *here,* if you will,—
  The birds are in session by dawn;
You can draw, not *complaints,* but a sketch of the
    hill
  And a breath that your betters have drawn;
You can open your heart, like a case,
  To a jury of kine, white and brown,
And their verdict of "Moo" will just satisfy you!—
  Can't you arrange to come down?

Can't you arrange it, old Pard?—
  Pigeonhole Blackstone and Kent!—
Here we have "Breitmann," and Ward,
  Twain, Burdette, Nye, and content!
Can't you forget you're a Judge
  And put by your dolorous frown
And tan your wan face in the smile of a friend—
  Can't you arrange to come down?

A WHOLLY UNSCHOLASTIC OPINION

PLAIN hoss-sense in poetry-writin'
Would jes' knock sentiment a-kitin'!
Mostly poets is all star-gazin'
And moanin' and groanin' and paraphrasin'!

1956

A SHORT'NIN' BREAD SONG—PIECED OUT

BEHINE de hen-house, on my knees,
Thought I hearn a chickin sneeze—
Sneezed so hard wi' de whoopin'-cough
I thought he'd sneeze his blame' head off.

CHORUS

Fotch dat dough fum the kitchin-shed—
Rake dem coals out hot an' red—
Putt on de oven an' putt on de led,—
Mammy's gwineter cook some short'nin' bread.

O I' got a house in Baltimo'—
Street-kyars run right by my do'—
Street-kyars run right by my gate,
Hit's git up soon an' set up late.

(CHORUS)

De raincrow hide in some ole tree
An' holler out, all hoarse, at me—
Sayes, "When I sing, de rain hit po'
So's you ain't 'bleedged to plow no mo'!"

(CHORUS)

1957

Ole man Toad, on High-low Hill,
He steal my dram an' drink his fill,—
Heels in the path, an' toes in the grass—
Hit ain't de fus' time an' shain't be de las'!

(Chorus)

When corn-plantin' done come roun',
Blackbird own de whole plowed-groun',—
Corn in de grain, as I've hearn said,
Dat's de blackbird's short'nin' bread.

(Chorus)

De sweetes' chune what evah I heard
Is de sairanade o' de mockin'-bird;
Whilse de mou'nfullest an' de least I love
Is de Sund'y-song o' de ole woods-dove.

(Chorus)

I nevah ain't know, outside o' school,
A smartah mare dan my ole mule,—
I holler "Wo," an' she go "gee,"
Des lak, de good Lord chast'nin' me.

(Chorus)

Hit's no houn'-pup I taken to raise
Hain't nevah jes'ly airn' my praise:
De mo' cawn-pone I feed dat pup,
De mo' he des won't fattnin up.

(Chorus)

A SHORT'NIN' BREAD SONG—PIECED OUT 1959

I hangs a hoss-shoe ovah my head,
An' I keeps a' ole sieve under de bed,
So, quinchiquently, I sleep soun',
Wid no ole witches pester'n' roun'.

(Chorus)

I jine de chu'ch las' Chuesday night,
But when Sis' Jane ain't treat me right
I 'low her chu'ch ain' none o' mine,
So I 'nounce to all I done on-jine.

(Chorus)

THE UNHEARD

I

ONE in the musical throng
Stood forth with his violin;
And warm was his welcome, and long
The later applause and the din.—
He had uttered, with masterful skill,
A melody hailed of men;
And his own blood leapt a-thrill,
As they thundered again.

II

Another stood forth.—And a rose
Bloomed in her hair—likewise
One at her tremulous throat—
And a *rapture* bloomed in her eyes.
Tempests of cheers upon cheers,
Praises to last a life long;
Roses in showers of tears—
All for her song.

1960

III

One sat apart and alone,
  Her lips clasped close and straight,
Uttering never a tone
  That the World might hear, elate—
Uttering never a low
  Murmurous verse nor a part
Of the veriest song—But O
    The song in her heart!

EQUITY—?

THE meanest man I ever saw
Allus kep' inside o' the law;
And ten-times better fellers I've knowed
The blame' gran'-jury's sent over the road.

1962

MOONSHINER'S SERENADE

THE night's blind-black, an' I 'low the stars's
All skeered at that-air dog's bow-wows!
I sensed the woods-road, clumb the bars,
An' arrove here, tromplin' over cows.
The mist hangs thick enough to cut,
But there's her light a-glimmerin' through
The mornin'-glories, twisted shut—
An' shorely there's her shadder too!

Ho! hit's good night,
My Beauty-Bright!
The moon cain't match your can'le-light—
Your can'le-light with you cain't shine,
Lau-ree! Lady-love! tiptoe-fine!

Oomh! how them roses soaks the air!—
Thess drenched with mist an' renched with dew!
They's a smell o' plums, too, 'round somewhere—
An' I kin smell ripe apples, too.
Mix all them sweet things into one,—
Yer roses, fruit, an' flower an' vine,
Yit I'll say, "No, I don't choose none,
Ef I kin git that gal of mine!"

1963

Ho! hit's good night,
My Beauty-Bright!
Primp a while, an' blow out the light—
Putt me in your prayers, an' then
I'll be twic't as good-again!

IN A BOX

I SAW them last night in a box at the play—
Old age and young youth side by side.—
You might know by the glasses that pointed that way
That they were—a groom and a bride;
And you might have known, too, by the face of the groom,
And the tilt of his head, and the grim
Little smile of his lip, he was proud to presume
That we men were all envying him.

Well, she was superb—an Elaine in the face—
A Godiva in figure and mien,
With the arm and the wrist of a Parian "Grace,"
And the high-lifted brow of a queen;
But I thought, in the splendor of wealth and of pride,
And her beauty's ostensible prize,
I should hardly be glad if she sat by my side
With that far-away look in her eyes.

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